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BRITAIN  
FACES GERMANY

*by*

A. L. KENNEDY

'The greatest events are produced by a  
nice train of little circumstances'

HENRY FIELDING in *Tom Jones*

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## PROLOGUE

THE only true conquest is conversion; and though we conquered Germany in 1918, we have failed to convert her to new ways. We very nearly succeeded; but — whether the fault is all on Germany's side or not — the Reich has reverted to a political hooliganism even more disturbing than the Prussianism which we disliked so much before 1914, and even more contrary to our notions of freedom at home and good fellowship in international conduct.

\* \* \*

Marshal Foch may have been right. I remember a conversation I had with him in the Invalides in 1928, the year before he died, when I was on my way to Geneva and spoke to him hopefully about the League of Nations and the part Stresemann was playing in it. 'The Reich,' he said, 'has been built up by war, and the work has not been undone. The German Empire stands. And the Germans still believe in war.' I ventured to demur. 'I believe it is a new Germany,' I said. 'Un peuple ne change pas comme ça,' he answered.

And yet I wonder. The refusal of France, whose views the old Marshal was expressing, to believe in a changed Germany, may itself have been a main reason why the post-War democratic regime did not become firmly established. Stresemann and Brüning



## PROLOGUE

were strong and able men and anxious to collaborate with other nations; Hitler himself began by making reasonable offers, which French unbelief brusquely rejected, and which we, with a mixture of good intentions and bad diplomacy, failed to turn to account.

\* \* \*

It is related of Martin Luther that when he wanted to pray effectually he thought of the Pope, which worked him up to a proper pitch of frenzy. In the War the German people had to be taught a Hymn of Hate to make them carry on the struggle fiercely. And now Hitler has stirred them again by rousing their hatred against the Treaty of Versailles. It is the German way; and so effectively has it been done this time that, although what was obnoxious and one-sided in the Treaty has been removed by Hitler's own efforts, the *Furor Teutonicus* remains. His methods, from the German point of view, have been justified; and Germans have had their belief in force and fury renewed.

\* \* \*

So it is far more difficult to create a new world-system now than it seemed a few years ago – that system which we expressed in terms of the Covenant of the League of Nations. We like to think that Great Britain (by which of course I mean the British Commonwealth) stands always for fair play, moderation, and justice in international affairs – ideas which

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may be summed up as sane internationalism and evolution without war. Peaceful change seems to me to be the essence of the matter. Policy has to be built somehow upon sand rather than upon rock. It will fail if it is based upon a supposed immutability of human affairs. Any new system will be doomed from the outset if it seeks to keep the world permanently *in statu quo*.

\* \* \*

The alternative to a new international system is:

The good old rule,  
    . . . the simple plan,  
That they should take who have the power,  
And they should keep who can.

In other words, the rule of tooth and claw, or of air-bombs and poison gas, which seems certain to prevail unless England and Germany can get together. But if our two countries can agree, we shall surely have as collaborators all those countries – and they are still the majority – whose political gospel is enshrined in the League Covenant and whose sovereign aspiration is expressed in the Pact of Paris, according to which war shall no longer be necessary as an instrument of political evolution.

To

*My Friend and Colleague*

*NORMAN EBBUTT*

*who has learnt to recognize*

*Truth in all her disguises*

■

PART ONE  
.  
VERSAILLES



## CHAPTER I

### THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

POST-WAR Germany is the child of Versailles and of Penury. The infant republic suffered severely from the war-neurosis and under-nourishment which were so common at the time of its birth; and it also inherited atavistic qualities from previous generations of Germans. From Versailles the young Reich received a smaller stature and less robustness than its immediately preceding forebears enjoyed; and although the weakling has developed almost abnormal muscular strength, its constitution still bears signs of the early years of strain. Psychologically, moreover, its natal inferiority complex has in recent years been converted into a violent form of self-assertion. The reaction of modern Germany to the birthmark of an imposed Peace Treaty has in fact been very similar to that of its last emperor to the defect of having one arm shrivelled from birth. As Dr. Emil Ludwig has shown, Kaiser Wilhelm II was early obsessed with the idea that he had to display 'a more spirited intrepidity' than other men. The love of 'resounding orations and menacing gestures' grew upon him; and in the end, Dr. Ludwig says, 'the moral victory over his physique became his destruction'.

Mother Penury, on her side, has brought out

strongly in young Germany those wonderful qualities of hard work, indifference to comfort, austerity, endurance, persistence, and subordination of self to the family which have ever been characteristic of the race. Kindliness and good-humour are there too; but these attributes, common to the Anglo-Saxon race, are apt to be completely overpowered at times of crisis by a hardness inherent in descent from the Huns (who, unlike the Anglo-Saxons, never crossed the Channel). The Hun spirit is dominant in Germany to-day. Brutalizing, masterful and cunning, unrestrained by scruple and adept at dissimulation, it sways and directs the passive majority of decent Germans.

But the influence of Versailles is so all-important to the understanding of the present Reich that it must be examined at greater length.

### *Territorial Provisions*

The Treaty of Peace deprived Germany, in the west, of Alsace and Lorraine, which were restored to France, and of the districts of Eupen and Malmédy, which were annexed by Belgium. In the north a plebiscite was ordained for the Danish duchies which Prussia had seized from Denmark in 1864. In the east the new republic of Poland was accorded sovereignty over a passage to the Baltic, and was also given the large tracts of German Silesia which were inhabited by Poles. Part of the new German-Polish frontier was held over for subsequent delimitation

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after a plebiscite, as also were the districts of Marienwerder and Allenstein, bordering upon East Prussia. The agricultural and 'Junker'<sup>1</sup> province of East Prussia was thus severed from the rest of Germany by the Polish Corridor. Danzig, a city which is German in character and population, though the great majority of the neighbouring rural population is Slav, was created into a small Free State under the aegis of the League of Nations. Memel, in the north-east, also became autonomous under the League.

The territorial surrenders of Germany were thus neither extensive nor vindictively imposed. With small exceptions they made over to other states only non-German populations, though most of the inhabitants of Alsace and of Eupen and Malmédy are akin to the inhabitants of the Reich. Moreover, the results of the plebiscites – itself a method of adjustment which was an unusual concession to a vanquished country – were loyally implemented. Denmark regained less of her lost duchies than she might have expected; and Marienwerder and Allenstein went bodily to Germany. Only in Upper Silesia were Polish economic ambitions allowed to overrule the numerical verdict of the voting; and on general European economic grounds it can also be argued that a division was made prejudicial to the ablest organizing State of the Continent, and therefore prejudicial to the European community. The Saar territory was placed under an international Commission for fifteen years,

<sup>1</sup> Squirearchy of a pronounced nationalist type.



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at the end of which it voted itself back to Germany. The Rhineland was to be occupied for fifteen years as a security for France and Belgium, and was thereafter to remain permanently demilitarized.

All the colonies previously owned by Germany, and captured from her during the War, were surrendered by her to the Allied and Associated Powers as a whole, and by them distributed among themselves and the British Dominions as Mandated Territories.<sup>1</sup> That is to say they were to be administered by them for the benefit of the native inhabitants, and an account of its stewardship was to be rendered annually by each administering Power to the Mandates Commission of the League of Nations. The League was in each case made responsible for the terms of the Mandate.

Most impartial observers would have agreed at that time with the verdict of the historian Dr. R. B. Mowat that the Treaty 'contained a fairer adjustment of territories (in Europe) than had previously existed'.<sup>2</sup> Undoubtedly both President Wilson and Mr. Lloyd George tried to put themselves in the position of arbiters, and to forget the passions of the War. Lloyd George, for instance, was successful in persuading the victorious Allies to make several concessions, such as preventing the absorption of Danzig by Poland, assuring a plebiscite in Silesia, and establishing the Mandate system for all the colonies lost by

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A.

<sup>2</sup> *A History of European Diplomacy, 1914-1925*, published in 1927.

## THE TREATY

Germany, though Dominion representatives in Paris wanted their outright annexation.

### *An Imposed Peace*

Nevertheless the Treaty entirely failed to satisfy Germany. The German people never accepted it, either in its territorial clauses or in those which imposed the payment of reparations and the one-sided reduction of her armaments. Their representatives at Versailles signed the Treaty almost literally at the point of the bayonet. Contrary to diplomatic custom, its terms had been arranged in the absence of German negotiators. Only when all the articles were drawn up — four hundred and forty of them — was Germany invited to send representatives to France. And when they arrived, oral discussion was forbidden to them. They were ensconced under surveillance in a Versailles hotel and given three weeks for consideration and written comment. The Germans made their objections in writing on May 29th, 1919, and one or two of them were allowed. Then the Treaty was laid before them again, this time for definite and unmodified acceptance or rejection. The Allied Council, usually known as 'the Big Four', simultaneously considered what forces would be required for the occupation of Berlin. Marshal Foch was authorized to begin an advance to the capital one week later — June 23rd — if acceptance had not by then been notified; and an ultimatum was dispatched to the German Government, sitting at

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Weimar. On June 22nd von Haniel, the temporary chief of the German delegation at Versailles, stated that the conditions imposed exceeded the measure of that which Germany could perform.

‘The German Government,’ he said, ‘declines all responsibility for the consequences which may be threatened against Germany when, as is bound to happen, the impossibility of carrying out the treaty conditions comes to light, even though German capacity to fulfil is stretched to the utmost.’

He added a plea that the Treaty should be submitted for revision within two years to a council of the Powers, in which Germany should have an equal voice. His request was not only a natural one in the circumstances; it was a statesmanlike proposal; but it met with a sharp refusal. The rebuff to von Haniel was the first of those disastrous ‘Noes’ to Germany which have laid upon the victorious countries so large a share of responsibility for the appalling conditions in which Europe now finds itself.

### *Unfavourable Conditions for Negotiating a Permanent Treaty*

It is probably true to say that the statesmen on the Allied side did not wish the Treaty to be a victors’ dictated peace, but their judgment was vitiated by the circumstances in which the negotiations were held. They were all convinced that Germany was primarily

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if not solely responsible for the War, and that she had waged it with exceptional ferocity and ruthlessness. Belgium and north-eastern France lay devastated before their eyes, the memory of millions of dead seared the serenity of their minds, the strain of over four years of terrific effort and anxiety had overstrained their nerves and rendered poise and mental detachment almost impossible. And Paris was the nodal point of the anti-German alliances. It was the inevitable place for the peace-making, and the worst place. To France Germany was a Caliban of destructive malevolence; and the habit of impartiality had been lost by all the negotiating statesmen. It could not be regained in a month or two. Moreover, the whole of Europe was exhausted and anarchic. The negotiators felt the need for haste, lest the international fabric should fall in ruins. As Mr. Lloyd George once expressed it:

‘While we were trying to build we saw in many lands the foundations of society crumbling . . . I am doubtful whether any body of men with a difficult task have worked under greater difficulties – stones crackling on the roof and crashing through the windows, and sometimes wild men screaming through the keyholes.’

Hurry became imperative, when hurry should have been the one thing to avoid; and once more one is forced to reflect upon the truth of the French saying: ‘Le temps respecte peu ce que l’on fait sans lui’.

## VERSAILLES

Yet the intentions of the Allies had been good. They had entertained the idea of following the regular diplomatic procedure – to settle the preliminaries between themselves and then call in the enemy to negotiate the final terms. But until the very last moment, as is established by Mr. Harold Nicolson, who was there himself, ‘the plenipotentiaries were themselves unaware whether the Peace they were negotiating was to be preliminary or final, imposed or negotiated’; and the same writer records the pregnant aside of the French diplomatist Jules Cambon: ‘Mon cher, savez-vous ce qui va résulter de cette conférence? Une *improvisation*.’ M. Cambon was right. The Peace Treaty was an improvisation.

### *Agreed Peace Still to be Made*

The truth is that there has never been a Peace Congress, in the full sense of the term, to close the epoch of the Great War. There has never been an agreed Peace. Until that painful truth has been admitted and given full weight there can be no enduring settlement in Europe. We imposed peace upon a prostrate Germany. We have still to make peace with a strong Germany.

## GERMAN OBJECTIONS TO THE TREATY

It has been said that the terms imposed were not vindictive, and were meant to be just. They were

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nevertheless considered vindictive and unjust by the Germans. Let us consider their point of view.

### *Incompatibility with the 'Fourteen Points'*

Their earliest and most persistent objection has been that the terms of the Treaty were inconsistent with the famous Fourteen Points enunciated by President Wilson, on the strength of which they sued for peace in October 1918. In order to help the reader to form a clear judgment on this issue – which is still frequently raised in Germany – a summary of the American President's statement of war aims is given in an appendix.<sup>1</sup> But the aims formulated before an international meeting are seldom or never completely achieved at the end of it; and no doubt the German people, like President Wilson's own Senate, may correctly establish discrepancies between purpose and achievement. President Wilson thought, as he said in a subsequent speech, that 'national purposes' had fallen into the background, and that 'the common purpose of enlightened mankind had taken their place'. It is permissible to suppose that M. Clemenceau, for one, accepted these sententious aspirations with his tongue in his cheek. But there is an important consideration which ought to be kept in mind and which diminishes the moral value of the grievance for Germany. It is that the President proclaimed his Fourteen Points on January 8th, 1918; and the German Government of

<sup>1</sup> Appendix B.

that day declined them as a basis of negotiation. 'Let them revise their programme once again,' Chancellor Hertling said; and he added that the military position was never so favourable. He listened, in fact, to Ludendorff rather than to Wilson. He thought that a smashing victory on land might still be won. The army chiefs were given a free hand; and they sent hundreds of thousands of men into the final holocaust of 1918, and reduced the War to a ghastly killing match from which the last glimmer of chivalry departed. Only when the three great offensives of 1918 had failed, and the Allied counter-attacks were being successful, did the German authorities again call to mind the Fourteen Points. On October 6th, Prince Max of Baden, who had in the meantime become Chancellor, told President Wilson that 'in order to avoid further bloodshed', he accepted the programme laid down by him on January 8th and September 27th, and accepted it as a basis for the peace negotiations.

On the other hand it is fair to recall that the Left opinion in Germany, which became vocal in the latter part of 1918 and influential afterwards, took the Fourteen Points very seriously, and there is some truth in the argument of the present Nazi history books that 'the Fourteen Points shattered the old strength of resistance in millions of Germans'. It would be nearer the whole truth to say that the armies and the blockading ships of the Allies broke the strength of Germany, and the Fourteen Points and the effective propaganda of Crewe House completed the process by destroying

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the will to resist. The British Propaganda Ministry, directed from Crewe House by Lord Northcliffe, Sir Campbell Stuart, Mr. Wickham Steed and others, made a deep impression on the German mind and morale. By one of the ironies of history its methods were later taken as a model by the National-Socialist Party. Its principles, however, were not, for the whole strength of Crewe House consisted in basing its advocacy upon the truth. Its main effort was to convey to the German people the real origin of the War and the aims of the Allies, which were not known to them. Hitler's view of propaganda is somewhat different. It is frankly stated in a passage of *Mein Kampf*, which is reproduced in a later chapter.

### *Reparations*

The first enthusiasms of the nascent Hitler party were stirred by denunciations of the Reparation demands of the Allies, and of the French occupation of the Ruhr, by which they were soon to be enforced. The Allies had gone to the Peace Conference pledged not to exact an indemnity from Germany, but only to demand from her compensation 'for all damages done to the civilian population of the Allies and their property by the aggression by Germany by land, by sea and from the air'. Since this question was settled by the release of Germany from the obligation to continue payments, at the Conference held at Lausanne in 1932, there is no need to enter into the details of its developments during the years from 1920 to 1932.



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But in general it may be said that it was from the first a matter of *Ehre*, or national honour, with the German people to pay as little as possible to their conquerors. By contrast with the French after the war of 1870-71, to whom it was a matter of honour to pay off the (much smaller) indemnity as soon as possible and so secure the withdrawal of the German army of occupation, it was a patriotic duty for the Germans to pay nothing; and those who advocated a policy of fulfilment came to be regarded as traitors. The ten years before 1932 corresponded with the spectacular growth of the Nazi Party, which always referred to reparations as a 'tribute' extorted from the innocent German people by weaker but triumphant conquerors, and declared that they were slaves and helots as long as they went on paying them. Orators naturally exploited to the fullest possible extent the employment by France of coloured troops in the Rhur. The many contradictions of the Allies in regard to the amount they demanded and the method of computing it also offered ample scope for sarcasm and invective. In the course of a decade it became absolutely clear to everybody that the whole system of reparations and inter-Allied debt payments had largely contributed to the economic crisis which then brought one government after another over the whole world to the verge of bankruptcy; and when the leader of the Catholic Centre Party, Dr. Brüning, who became Chancellor of Germany in 1930, announced that 'the future transfer of reparation annuities' would endanger the economic life of his

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country there were few to contradict him. The French Government even then professed to believe in the possibility of collecting further payments from the Reich; and the British Government was placed in a difficult position by the uncompromising attitude of the United States in regard to War Debts. Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, however, presided with great skill over the Lausanne meeting, and its outcome was the removal from the German people of a grievance which was partly justified. And this result was also a vindication of the agitation of the Nazis.

### *War Guilt*

Closely allied with the question of Reparations was the charge of responsibility for the War affixed upon Germany and her allies by Article 231 of the Treaty. The clause was put at the head of the Reparations Chapter, and was apparently intended as a legal justification of the pecuniary demands made upon the Reich. Since the Treaty was forced upon Germany, her acceptance of War Guilt was devoid of moral value; and in practice this clause became one of the most effective weapons in the Nazi armoury. Their spokesmen almost always slightly distorted its wording – which ‘affirmed the responsibility of Germany and her allies’ – by inserting the word ‘sole’ before responsibility and leaving out the words ‘and her allies’, a distortion which has been too readily repeated by apologists for Germany in other countries. I agree with Mr. Gathorne Hardy and other impartial com-

mentators that the clause is substantially true, but is out of place in the Treaty of Peace. In any case the labours of German – not only National-Socialist – publicists have brought the German public round to believe that Germany was the least guilty of all nations for the outbreak of war in 1914. Speaking of the early days of his movement, Hitler says in *Mein Kampf*: 'The proceedings nearly always started with the subject of War Guilt, about which nobody then bothered.' Whether or not this is strictly true, other people soon took up the Nazi cry, and the belief is now general among Germans that the invasion of Belgium was forced upon Germany by the Machiavellian contrivances of foreign countries. And the doctrine is now commonly asserted and believed that if Germany decides that her safety is threatened, she is entitled to attack. It is the apotheosis of the German political philosophy that German racial interests are 'sacred' and that whatever Germany does in their name must be right.

It is impossible to exaggerate, in the circumstances of to-day, the dangerous implication of this national creed.

### *The 'Colonial Lie'*

In the speeches of Nazi orators more is now heard about the 'Colonial Lie' than about 'The War Guilt Lie'. If you ask the average German what he means by the 'Colonial Lie', he will tell you that he refers to the passage in the Treaty of Versailles in which Germany is declared to be unfit for Colonial rule. This

## THE TREATY

answer was given to me even by an official of the Colonial Department of the Office for Germans Resident Abroad. Actually there is no such statement in the text of the Treaty. The passage which Germans undoubtedly have in mind occurs in the 'Reply of the Allied and Associated Powers to the Observations of the German Delegation on the Conditions of Peace', which was addressed by M. Clemenceau to Count Brockdorff-Rantzau after the Germans had asked for modifications of the original peace terms. The passage is worth quoting in full, because the Colonial question is of immediate importance as between Great Britain and Germany. It runs as follows:

'Finally, the Allied and Associated Powers are satisfied that the native inhabitants of the German colonies are strongly opposed to being again brought under Germany's sway, and the record of German rule, the traditions of the German Government and the use to which these colonies were put as bases from which to prey upon the commerce of the world, make it impossible for the Allied and Associated Powers to return them to Germany, or to entrust to her the responsibility for the training and education of their inhabitants.'

The question of the former German colonies will be discussed in later chapters, so at the moment it is sufficient to say that the passage in M. Clemenceau's letter contains no opprobrious expression, and has obviously been extracted and exploited for purposes of

propaganda. Herr Hitler himself, as is well known, first discouraged the claim for the reversion of the former oversea possessions. He says in *Mein Kampf* that it ought to wait until all Germans in Europe have been 'reunited in one State'. But a small and active coterie of former colonial officials took up the case for the return of the German colonies, and during the last year or two their policy has been adopted as an official item in the Party programme; and the claim has been endorsed by the Führer. Before leaving the subject for the moment it may be mentioned that while Germany was in the League of Nations she automatically became a member of the Mandates Commission, and both on that body and in the Council her representatives had every opportunity of supervising the administration of all the oversea territories previously owned by the German Empire.

### *Disarmament*

Those who have never mingled with a German audience listening to the speech of one of the Nazi leaders will find it difficult to imagine the fervour which is habitually generated by their oratory. Every artifice is employed, before ever the speaker appears, in order to stimulate enthusiasm – banners and patriotic mottoes catch the eye, national music stirs the mind, and short, sharp addresses, extolling the fatherland or the chief speaker of the evening, attune the 20,000 packed Party men and women into a united throng of

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eager listeners, vibrant as a musical instrument, and as responsive to whatever note the orator chooses to strike. The critical instincts of the individual German seem to become completely merged in the herd-like sentiment of the mass. And the speeches poured out upon them night after night on the War Guilt clause and the Colonial Lie and the other iniquities of the Peace Treaty in the end produced a powerful and indeed irresistible impulse in the people, the strength of which was long not realized abroad. Curiously enough, one of the grievances which ultimately made the most impression on foreign opinion was very slow in moving opinion at home. The one-sided disarmament of Germany was easily tolerated for some years by the Socialist Governments and by the majority of the people of Germany, because it was genuinely believed that, in accordance with the phrase in the Treaty, the reduction of German armaments had been effected 'in order to render possible the initiation of a general limitation'. There existed of course a powerful military and nationalist minority which never for one moment accepted the limitation of German arms, and whose one purpose from the first day of the peace was to re-create the military strength of the country. But throughout the labours of the Preparatory Disarmament Conference (1926-30) Germany was ably and actively represented by Count Bernstorff, the former Ambassador in Washington. He repeatedly contributed useful and practical suggestions to its discussions, while never abating the claim of Germany to ultimate

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equality with other great nations; but (having watched the proceedings of the Preliminary Conference and of the full Conference throughout) I am convinced that right up to the moment of the Hitler offer of April 1934 it would have been possible to win Germany for an equalized limitation of armaments, and that Hitler himself was eager that the limitation should include the prohibition of the manufacture of bombing aeroplanes. The question of armaments is, however, so important that it must be reserved for separate treatment. It is sufficient here to say that the Treaty of Versailles did not lay down or intend that the discrepancy between German armed strength and that of other nations should endure for ever, that Germany for some time took the implied promise of general limitation seriously, and that the folly and ineptitude of Allied, and particularly of French diplomacy is mainly responsible for the race in armaments which is now in full course and which is creating a general propensity to war.

### *The Polish Corridor*

The evolution of German public feeling in regard to disarmament has been reversed in the case of the separation of East Prussia from the rest of the Reich. In the first case the grievance was discovered late, and then indignation grew so strong that the injustice was eventually removed by the unilateral action of the National-Socialist Government; and foreign Governments ended by acquiescing, albeit reluctantly. In the

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case of East Prussia indignation blazed up almost at once to fever heat, and during the years immediately following the War 'the Corridor' appeared to be the most likely item of the whole peace settlement to cause a European explosion. It formed the pet foreign theme of the earlier Nazi orations. This 'mutilation of the Fatherland', as it was quite naturally described, was denounced as the most flagrant indignity which Germany had suffered, and as the first wrong which the National-Socialist regime would remedy. Demonstrations of a challenging kind were organized along the hated frontier by followers of Hitler; while non-Nazi diplomatists confided to their foreign friends that the Corridor was a humiliation which a strong Germany would never tolerate. When Hitler assumed power, and still more when his policy of rearmament was openly admitted, the most serious misgivings were entertained in all the Chanceries of Europe.

But what happened? The agitation was called off; and to the extreme chagrin of Nazi chauvinists their Führer concluded a Pact with Poland within his first year of office. In January 1934 he signed a Treaty with Marshal Pilsudski renouncing for a period of ten years the use of force in the settlement of the differences between the two countries. Not only did Hitler put his signature to this reversal of his pre-office policy; he shortly afterwards also made a cultural agreement with Pilsudski, by which their two Governments undertook mutually to encourage an amicable tone in all public references to the other party, and to influence the



cinema, the Press and school textbooks in a sense likely to produce mutual esteem.

The motives of this *volte-face* have been variously explained. Most competent observers believed, and still believe, that a settlement of accounts with Poland has been postponed rather than renounced. There were many reasons why, in 1934, Germany was not prepared to try conclusions with Poland, the most obvious being that she herself was still insufficiently armed and that Poland was ruled by a masterful and resolute soldier. I have been told on excellent authority that Marshal Pilsudski gave the Government of the Reich to understand that any German action against the Corridor would be met instantly by Polish retaliation, which would probably include the seizure of East Prussia. Hitler accordingly thought it best to come to terms, and did so in his usual decisive manner.

Hitler is certainly much more ready to listen to dictators than to democracies, for which he has a deep-seated contempt; and it is significant that Marshal Pilsudski, from having been regarded as an arch-enemy, not only by Germans in general but by the Nazis in particular, became a much respected figure in the Reich. And after his death his death-mask fashioned in plaster became almost as frequent an exhibit in German shops as the very popular death-mask of Frederick the Great.

Various other motives no doubt influenced both Hitler and Pilsudski in coming to their political and cultural agreements, such as the desire of Poland to become less dependent upon France, and the pre-

occupation of Hitler with internal problems; and at that time Austria appeared to offer him the most hopeful field for foreign adventure. But the case of the Corridor remains of the utmost interest and importance in the study of German foreign relations. The Nazis are expert at turning to their own advantage the weaknesses of opponents, as Bismarck was before them; and Pilsudski, who understood the German and Russian characters equally well, knew the value of displaying his strength from the very first moment. He believed that to show strength first and conciliatoriness afterwards is the best sequence in dealing with Germany.

Equally significant was Hitler's ability, which this episode illustrated, to reverse his propaganda machine. In the future relationship of Germany with foreign countries his power to control opinion may be found to be more important than any other consideration. The direction of propaganda is a factor of which not much account has been taken by Western European diplomacy. It is, however, far more than a domestic matter. The future foreign policy of the dictator countries is deliberately formed by a preliminary process of education. Its repercussions abroad are generally visible in advance. It is therefore foolish and short-sighted to ignore the process of their production merely because it is technically an internal matter and has not hitherto entered into the purview of diplomacy. In certain countries, of which Germany is one, it is becoming a preliminary and important part of diplomatic practice.

*One-Sided Application of the Principle  
of Self-Determination*

The Polish Corridor, as modified by Lloyd George in favour of Germany, was undoubtedly the fairest settlement which could be made in that part of the world, and accorded with President Wilson's 13th Point, providing for the re-created State 'a free and secure access to the sea'. As has already been said, the territorial clauses were not vindictively imposed upon Germany; but if they did not include sins of commission they cannot be considered devoid of sins of omission. The principle of nationality on which the Treaty was drawn up was not transgressed to the extent of tearing pieces of German-inhabited territory from Germany—as it tore pieces from Hungary—and allotting them to other races; but the framers of the peace carefully refrained from applying the principle in cases where it would have enlarged Germany. Let us frankly admit that in the atmosphere and tempers of 1919 it would have been too much to expect such complete impartiality, such generosity to have been shown. Human nature, and especially European human nature, is not made like that. But the admission is another proof that the 'just settlement' which the Allied statesmen professed and desired could not in fact be attained at that time. The German population of Austria proper, for instance, finding themselves left high and dry by the creation of Czechoslovakia and Hungary as independent states and the enlargement of Italy and Yugoslavia,

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voted their adhesion to Germany; but this clear act of self-determination was simply ignored. Nor, so far as I can discover, were the German inhabitants of Bohemia given any chance of joining the German Reich if they so desired. In both cases Germany would, without the slightest doubt, have welcomed the accession; and it became Point 1 in the 25 Points of Hitler's original programme to achieve 'the union of all Germans to form a Great Germany on the basis of the right of self-determination'. Just as conquered France, after the Napoleonic Wars, became the champion of liberal institutions against Metternich, so Germany, the vanquished, may claim to be the champion of one of the principles which the victors of 1918 professed; and which they carried out, and more than carried out, in the interests of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Yugoslavia, Italy, France, Belgium and Denmark. For these countries the War had been a war of liberation. To a greater or lesser degree their nationals had been kept under by the German and Austro-Hungarian Empires for centuries. In the exuberance of victory and new-found freedom most of them took too much. But the treaties of Peace denied to the former enemies rights which they proclaimed had been won for mankind.

### *Economics Neglected*

Nor was any serious attempt made, until the Conference of Genoa in 1922, to preserve the economic unity of Europe, or to secure some sort of equality

either in the distribution or utilization of the world's raw materials. The Habsburg Monarchy was undoubtedly a political anachronism; but it did at least integrate the different regions of a natural economic unit. Most of the Danube valley was contained in its dominions, and with the neighbouring Danubian countries, Germany and the Balkans, close commercial ties had been formed. But industrial particularism was allowed to go alongside of political emancipation; and an exuberant economic nationalism destroyed the little that was left of European unity—just at the moment when the League of Nations was created with the object of fostering the community feeling among all nations.

The Germans therefore were entitled to object, as they did in their Note of May 29th (1919) to the Allies, that the peace settlement had been based at one moment on the principle of self-determination, at another on that of economic necessity, and at another on that of historic rights—and that in every case the decision went against Germany.

Nor did it appear more tolerable because, as Harold Nicolson says, these results were obtained less by evil intention than by vagueness of purpose. The purpose did not, in fact, appear to the average German to be vague at all. It seemed to be quite clear—to diminish Germany.

### *Military Disabilities*

Territory had been taken away in the west and in the east, in the north and in the south. But this was

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not the worst. Those Germans who were able to look at the matter objectively – and many did after the crash of 1918 – recognized that the land taken from them was not inhabited by Germans. But all of them, whatever their outlook, disliked the separation of East Prussia from the rest of the Reich, and hated even more vehemently the imposition of disabilities within the territory that remained to them. In the long stretch of Rhineland from Belgium to Switzerland they were prohibited from erecting fortifications or even from holding military manoeuvres. The total armed strength of the country was reduced to that of a third-rate Power, and they were not allowed to possess a General Staff. An inter-Allied Military Mission was entitled to move about the country investigating, checking and destroying armaments, and for a year or two exploded guns and broken-up submarines were a not uncommon sight of the countryside or sea-coast. Their Navy was reduced to almost negligible proportions. They were not allowed to make any tanks, to build any fortifications or to possess an air force. Not even anti-aircraft guns were allowed. Conscription was forbidden.

It was seen, moreover, that the new frontiers had been so drawn as to deprive Germany of the fortresses which, in the west as in the east, had afforded the artificial defensive lines which the absence of any natural ramparts made necessary. The fortified positions of Cologne, Coblenz and Mainz were all within the demilitarized area, while Thionville, Metz

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and Strassburg had become French; and on the other side the great fortresses of Graudenz and Thorn had gone to Poland. In the south, too, instead of the Austro-Hungarian ally, was a feeble Austrian republic dominated by the ex-allied states, and a vigorously national and well-armed Czechoslovakia.

There were Socialists and Communists in abundance who dreamed of a new internationalism and who accepted these limitations without anger; and Germans as a whole bore them with resignation so long as, in the first place, they felt quite unable effectively to obtain their modification, and secondly so long as they retained the belief that something of the same sort was going to be done in other countries. But militarism is never far below the surface in Germany; and when this reduction to military impotence began to look intentionally and permanently one-sided it required but little effort on the part of a determined minority to bring it to the top.

But the revolt against Versailles – or, put in another way, the attempt to revise the Treaty of Versailles – did not assume large dimensions until later on. There was first a period of reconciliation between Germany and her former enemies, which began with the negotiation of the Treaty of Locarno.

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PART TWO

LOCARNO



# GERMANY AND THE TREATY OF VERSAILLES

STRESEMANN	TREATY OF LOCARNO	}	FULFILMENT
	DAWES PLAN		
	YOUNG PLAN		
	KELLOGG PACT		
	LEAGUE OF NATIONS		
BRÜNING	HAGUE (RHINELAND EVACUATION)	}	MODIFICATION
	LAUSANNE		
	ANSCHLUSS		
	LONDON CONFERENCE		
	DISARMAMENT		
HITLER	SEPARATION OF COVENANT FROM TREATY.	}	REVISION BY AGREEMENT
	WAR GUILT, ETC.		
	COLONIAL RIGHTS		
	EQUALITY IN ARMA- MENTS.		
	NAVAL REARMAMENT		
	WITHDRAWAL FROM LEAGUE.	}	REVISION BY UNILATERAL ACTION
	MILITARY CLAUSES DENOUNCED.		
	CONSCRIPTION RE- INTRODUCED.		
	RHINELAND REOCCUPIED.		
	WATERWAYS AND KIEL CANAL RE-NATIONALIZED.		

## CHAPTER II

### THE TREATY OF LOCARNO, 1925

THE Treaty of Locarno was the brilliant beginning of reconciliation between the enemies of 1914-1919, and one of the few post-War examples of statesmanship in action. It was negotiated by leaders in anticipation of public opinion. Like the works of some of the great masters of music, which offend public taste when first heard, but afterwards win applause and popularity, so the best work of statesmen has often upset or bewildered the public before its import and beneficence have been fully grasped. Such was for instance the case with Joseph Chamberlain's movement for a system of Imperial Preference; and when Herr Stresemann and M. Briand first agreed to negotiate a Pact of Security with Sir (then Mr.) Austen Chamberlain, they had to defy the prejudices of their respective peoples – they themselves, incidentally, being hardly yet on speaking terms. Lord D'Abernon (who was Ambassador in Berlin at the time) says that of all the qualities which Gustav Stresemann had to show at that time physical courage was the greatest, for he was exposing himself to such chances of assassination that no prudent insurance company would have assumed the risk of a life policy. The French Foreign Minister, on his side, was risking at least his political life. In England the

cautious-minded considered the project premature, and a Foreign Office opinion, carrying for a while Austen Chamberlain with it, would have preferred a defensive alliance between Great Britain and France.

### *Its Inception*

The first tentative proposal for an agreement between 'the Powers interested in the Rhine' was sent by Berlin to London on January 20th, 1925. It met with a chilly reception; but chiefly because, as Sir Austen subsequently explained, it was directed exclusively to the British Government, with a request to keep it secret from France. This procedure was nevertheless repeated when, three weeks later, the same proposal and the same condition of bilateral secrecy was sent to Paris. M. Herriot resented as much as Chamberlain the apparent attempt to keep France and Great Britain apart; and it was as much by good luck as good management that the negotiations survived the first dim-sighted gropings.

### *Its Negotiation*

Once, however, the proposal had been formally accepted by the three originating Powers, the negotiations were conducted with the utmost skill by Chamberlain, Briand and Stresemann. Public opinion in France and Germany was gradually let into the secret, and Belgium and Italy were opportunely invited to take their part. Austen Chamberlain unexpectedly

showed himself a master of diplomatic technique. Twice he encountered obstacles which might, with less firm and less prompt handling, have shattered the negotiations. The first occasion was when he had delivered a speech in the House of Commons during the first Locarno debate, in which he set forth the obligations of peaceful settlement to be undertaken by Germany in Eastern as well as Western Europe. At the close of the speech he received a message from the German Ambassador, Herr Sthamer, who had been listening in the Gallery, asking if he might see him at once; and he informed the Foreign Secretary that he (Chamberlain) had gone rather far in what he had said about Eastern Europe. Without hesitation and on his own responsibility Chamberlain asked him if Germany wished to reserve the right to go to war there in furtherance of her political aims, and added that, if that represented the attitude of the German Government, he must speak again in the House and unsay what he had just said about the British Government being ready to go through with the German project. His firmness halted the Ambassador, and after reference to Berlin the negotiations proceeded on the only lines which could be acceptable to Great Britain and to France.

In view of some subsequent diplomatic failures it is worth noting how successfully Chamberlain turned the embarrassment of Sthamer's move into an opportunity. Chamberlain knew his objective, and recognized at once the great importance of the point which the Ambassador raised in his room at the House of

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Commons. In diplomacy a casual remark may sometimes have the highest significance, while a formal statement may have but little. A negotiator has only his own judgment to help him to assess relative values, and he usually has to decide immediately. Otherwise he may be undesirably committed, or may have missed an opportunity.

Once again at the very end of the negotiations, Chamberlain had to stand rock-firm, and risk the success of the scheme to which he had devoted months of strenuous negotiation, rather than yield a point which he had decided was unacceptable. At Locarno itself, whither the negotiations had been carried for face-to-face discussion after eight months of diplomatic preparation, the German delegation demanded a considerable concession, without which, they said, they would not be able to initial the Draft Treaty next day. For a moment all was in jeopardy; but on the morrow the Germans had relented. The Agreement was initialled on October 16th at Locarno, and signed in the following December in London.

### *Its Contents*

By the terms of the Treaty Great Britain and Italy guaranteed the Franco-German and Belgo-German frontiers equally against aggression from either side; but in all cases but two the question whether the obligation to intervene had arisen was left to the Council of the League of Nations, on which Great Britain had a permanent seat. The exceptions were in

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the cases of a flagrant violation of the promise not to invade the territory of the other, which had to be recognized as flagrant by the guaranteeing Powers; and of a 'flagrant breach' by Germany of the clauses of the Treaty of Versailles which demilitarized the Rhineland. But in this case too the guarantor had the right to satisfy himself that the act of aggression was unprovoked and that, by reason of its nature, immediate action was necessary. Great Britain, therefore, while morally bound to take immediate action in certain cases, was herself the judge of whether those cases had arisen. Further, the guarantees were good for European frontiers only, and not for colonial territory.

In addition to the main Treaty of Mutual Guarantee the Locarno Agreements contained Treaties of Arbitration between Germany on the one hand and France, Belgium, Poland and Czechoslovakia on the other.

### *A New Model*

The Treaty of Locarno was a new model, unknown before in the history of nations. It contained no alliance, and bound no one nation to any other particular nation. It was patterned on the Covenant of the League, and directly linked with the mechanism of the League. It made bindingly and precisely effective in one of the storm centres of Europe the obligation to resist aggression, from whichever of the guaranteed signatories it should come. The Covenant

indeed placed this obligation upon all its signatories; but in so general and ubiquitous a manner as to make the commitment impracticable. The wording of the Covenant took no account of geographical conditions or of relative strengths. It treated all nations as equally capable of taking action everywhere.

At Locarno British obligations were strengthened in regard to Western Europe because they were specified and limited. The commitment which Great Britain had assumed under Article XVI<sup>1</sup> of the Covenant was formally defined in the following terms to Germany – the terms being also subscribed to by the other ex-Allied signatories, on the understanding that Germany herself would enter the League as soon as possible after the signature of the Treaty:

‘We are not in a position to speak in the name of the League, but . . . we do not hesitate to inform you of the interpretation which, so far as we are concerned, we place upon Article XVI.

‘In accordance with that interpretation the obligations resulting from the said Article on the members of the League must be understood to mean that each State member of the League is bound to co-operate loyally and effectively in support of the Covenant and in resistance to any act of aggression to an extent which is compatible with its military situation and takes its geographical position into account.’

<sup>1</sup> For the Text of Article XVI itself, see Appendix C.

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This last paragraph is a classic for British Foreign policy. It has become axiomatic and holds good to-day. It clarified the whole of Great Britain's relationship to Central Europe.

Simultaneously with the initialling of the General Treaty of Mutual Guarantee at Locarno, France concluded defensive treaties with Poland and Czechoslovakia, binding herself reciprocally to render immediate aid and assistance in the event of an unprovoked recourse to arms against any one of them. The British Foreign Secretary signed no such treaties, which were frankly of the old one-sided pattern, although they contained expressions of allegiance to the League Covenant. Great Britain therefore did not incur, and has not since incurred, an absolute or individual obligation to take any specific action in the event of an invasion of Poland or Czechoslovakia. She is bound to those States, as she was to Germany so long as she was a member of the League of Nations, by the general obligations of the Covenant, interpreted and modified in regard to Article XVI by the clause reproduced on the previous page. Germany of course obtained in addition a special call upon Great Britain under the main Pact of Locarno, which she forfeited only when she denounced the Treaty. It may further be assumed, from the wording of the interpretative paragraph, that the obligations of Great Britain under Article XVI are therein defined towards all members of the League, since there is no specific restriction to the Locarno signatories.

Another principle of the utmost importance was



enshrined in the Locarno Treaty – namely that Great Britain could not be committed to a *casus foederis* without the particular and explicit consent of the British Government. The principle is contained in the terms of the Treaty itself, as has already been shown; and the proviso must be regarded as an invariable and indispensable condition of British co-operation, if only because the House of Commons has always to vote special supplies for each occasion, and may refuse to vote them.

The Treaty also afforded a classical example of how to make good and proper use of the League of Nations. Chamberlain realized that the League was not well adapted to take diplomatic negotiation out of the hands of the diplomatists. The Council, with its array of pre-selected States, is especially well suited for arbitral functions because the majority of the Governments represented upon it are usually not immediately concerned in the particular issue submitted to them; but for the very reason that it contains South American and other distant countries it is unsuited for negotiation upon European problems, for which it has sometimes been utilized. The Treaty of Locarno was negotiated by representatives of States whom it immediately interested. But they kept the League always in mind; and fitted the execution of the clauses of the Treaty to its machinery.

### *No 'National' War*

Besides being a model of how to give effect to the principles of the League, the Treaty also anticipated

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the doctrine subsequently expressed in the Pact of Paris – that war was no longer, as it had been considered to be in the past, a legitimate instrument of national policy; for the responsibility of deciding whether recourse to arms was justifiable or not was in every case left for the international decision of the League Council – even though, as has already been explained, Great Britain, being a permanent member of that body, was herself able to influence its decisions, and had in practice also to carry along in their execution the approval of the Parliament at Westminster. In other words, the best feasible compromise was reached between internationalism and national sovereignty.

### *The Dominions*

One last feature of the Treaty, which likewise made it the first political instrument of its kind for Great Britain, was the clause which excluded the Dominions from participating in it, except by their express consent. This bold innovation – introduced by the son of the greatest imperialist of recent British history – was severely criticized at the time as a blow to Imperial unity. But the Dominion and Indian Governments accepted it readily. The varied character of the British Commonwealth makes compromise with the ideal even more necessary than usual if policy is to take shape in action; and the aversion of the outlying parts of the Empire from being bound to intervention

## LOCARNO

in Europe was happily combined with an open invitation to them either to enter the Treaty *ab initio* or to take part in its execution, when action should become necessary. Locarno thus embodied the principle, which is implicit in the nature of the Commonwealth, that each of its Governments should take the lead in that part of the world where its own interests are most nearly concerned. Each in its turn will speak primarily for itself, but it may reasonably count upon getting the support of its independent but associated fellow-members of the Empire.

### *Its Defect*

A model for British statesmanship in almost every respect – in regard to negotiation, character and scope – the Treaty of Locarno contained nevertheless one serious defect – it incorporated a one-sided provision of the Treaty of Versailles; and the defect was enhanced by the absence of any provision in the Treaty itself for its modification. It should never have been supposed that Germany would acquiesce for ever in the demilitarization of her side of the Rhine if France and Belgium did not agree to a similar condition on the west side. In absence of any such provision Germany would some day take the right to do as she liked in her own western provinces – as many foretold at the time. It was, however, entirely natural that the Rhineland clauses should be included in the Treaty, because Germany herself proposed their inclusion in her

## THE TREATY

original drafts to London and Paris on January 20th and February 9th. Those large defortified regions were at once a reassurance and a safeguard to France and Belgium, still scarred with the wounds of invasion, and trembling at the thought of its repetition. Germany realized the value of the zones as an earnest of goodwill and a guarantee of stability, and as she voluntarily re-enacted that part of the Peace Treaty, France and Belgium could certainly not be expected to reject it. But provision should have been made for the ultimate elimination or modification of this one-sided arrangement. The Treaty of Locarno also made no mention of the possibility of invasion by air. It was in these respects based too much upon the experience of the last War and too little upon imaginative foresight.

But it constituted none the less, as Lord Halifax has recently said, a 'strong-point in the peace defensive system'; and Chamberlain had the right to the hope, which he expressed immediately after its conclusion, that it would come to be regarded as 'the real dividing-line between the years of war and the years of peace'. The meeting on the banks of Lago Maggiore was in fact the real Peace Congress of Western Europe. Its result was the first definite and voluntary acceptance by Germany of new frontiers. The Treaty was the beginning of a policy of fulfilment and of co-operation. The manner of its negotiation created a new spirit, and, in the minds of German commentators themselves, did much to counterbalance the impression

left by the dictated Peace. The signature of the Treaty certainly produced a tranquillizing effect all over Europe, and partly re-established the shattered prestige of Europe in the rest of the world.<sup>1</sup>

### *Dawes and Young Plans*

The Treaty of Locarno, even in its broken form, remains a monument to the sagacity of Sir Austen Chamberlain. But, alas, the policy of positive fulfilment of the Treaty of Versailles had but a short life. It comprised, while it lasted, the conclusion of the Dawes and Young Plans for the contribution and transfer of annual reparation payments by the ex-enemy States in fulfilment of the financial clauses of the Peace Treaty. These business arrangements were signed respectively in August 1924 and June 1929. The second of them was confirmed at Conferences held in The Hague at the end of 1929 and early in 1930, and shortly afterward was accepted by Germany with large majorities both in the Reichstag and in a popular referendum. But even before the agreement was ratified the movement for its repudiation began; and – the world-wide economic crisis having intervened – it was cancelled by general consent at the Conference of Lausanne in 1932.

<sup>1</sup> It seems to me to be singularly indiscriminating on the part of Mr. Lloyd George to bracket Locarno with the Stresa Pact, the Franco-Russian Treaty and the Little Entente alliance as a 'particularist undertaking' contrary to the principles enunciated by President Wilson, on which Germany agreed to make peace (*War Memoirs*, Vol. VI, p. 3254, footnote). The Treaty of Locarno differed totally from the others in including Germany as an equal negotiator and partner.

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### *League of Nations and Kellogg Pact*

On the political side Germany adopted the policy of 'the good European' by joining the League of Nations in 1926; and she signed the Pact of Paris, commonly known as the Kellogg Pact, in 1928.<sup>1</sup> She thereby went back upon the teaching of Clausewitz, Treitschke and her other warrior-thinkers that war is a continuation of policy by other means, and formally renounced the use of force as an instrument for the furtherance of national aims.

### *Herr Stresemann*

It was Herr Stresemann who, though he was already a sick man, made the journey to Paris to sign the Kellogg Pact, by which war was deprived of its legality even more completely than by the Covenant of the League, and it is with his name that the short-lived 'policy of fulfilment' will always be associated. During the period (1923 to 1929) when his influence predominated, German foreign policy was conducted – a rare occurrence – by a man who was essentially a diplomatist. By political origin he was a nationalist and by temperament he was bellicose; but he chose a policy of understanding as alone possible for Germany in his time; and at his death he left his own country stronger and Europe more peaceful than he had found them when he took office. Having signed the Treaty of Locarno, he led Germany into the League of Nations and there he displayed to the advantage of his country

<sup>1</sup> For the terms of the Pact of Paris, see Appendix D.

the great diplomatic qualities with which nature had endowed him. His appearance was not prepossessing. His broad and unshapely figure, coarse features, and a complexion that alternated between dead white and fiery red would have been repelling had it not been for the shrewd and humorous look which shone from his eyes and which was a true indication of an unusually brilliant mind and genial character. He was a most human patriot with a great zest for life. He combined the boldness of the statesman, who had had the courage to call off 'passive resistance' against the French in the Ruhr, and the subtlety of the diplomatist who could detect and turn to his profit the slightest wavering of *vis-à-vis* negotiators. At the Council table of the League he frequently found himself in opposition to the rest of his colleagues, but he could without giving offence intervene to turn the course of the debate in his favour, and always judged to a nicety how far he could go without rupturing the diplomatic solidarity which, for the great good of Europe, had been established between Austen Chamberlain, M. Briand and himself. And he also knew when to abstain, as on the occasion of the first abortive attempt to make Germany a member of the League. Her election was not consummated owing to miserable disputes between other States who were also candidates for Council seats. A lesser man than Stresemann might have tried to exploit their dissensions. He was frequently consulted by the disputant parties. But he maintained a genial reserve. He

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realized the jealousies and genuine difficulties which the entry of Germany into the League must cause and he determined that no ill-timed animadversions should jeopardize in advance the part he meant to play later and the influence he hoped to wield. And his reward came afterwards, when he was a dominating figure in the Assembly and often took the lead in Council and Committee. If Stresemann had lived and had retained his hold upon his own countrymen it is as certain as anything unprovable can be that the Disarmament Conference would have achieved success, at least in Europe. His premature death was as great a misfortune for the world as the death of the liberal-minded Emperor Frederick had been at the end of the Bismarckian period.

During the War Stresemann had been a bitter critic of early negotiations for peace, an advocate of submarine activity, and an opponent of the restoration of Belgium; and he voted against the acceptance of the Treaty of Versailles. He was a Nationalist, as Lord D'Abernon describes him, of the full-blooded, militant and aggressive type. He therefore always understood and sympathized with the feelings of the Nationalist Party, which throughout his years of office led the opposition to him; for the form of government in Germany was still parliamentary, and the opposition of the Nazis was wrongly regarded as negligible because it was irregular and revolutionary. Stresemann never entirely lost his affinities with the Nationalists; and he has been accused by foreign critics of insincerity and duplicity because he sometimes gave expression to



their views. There was one occasion at Geneva, when he let himself go to a festive gathering of compatriots, at which no foreigners were present. But there are no secrets at Geneva; and next day the whole world knew that Stresemann had uttered chauvinistic aspirations which would have done credit to General Ludendorff. There was also a famous letter to the ex-Crown Prince, in which he wrote of the need for '*finassieren*'. And after the Hague Conference he let his view slip out that Germany would not be paying the reparation annuities for very much longer. These, I think, may be described as the frank opinions of a politician who had to try to please every Party in the State, who saw the absolute necessity of temporizing in both home and foreign affairs, and who never concealed his ultimate ambition of regaining for Germany much of what she had lost in the War. That ambition was shared after him no less by Dr. Brüning than by Herr Hitler; but the all-important difference between the first two and the present dictator of the Reich is that they meant to obtain modifications by legal and peaceful means and the Führer is obtaining them illegally and by threat of violence. Stresemann wanted to get the eastern frontiers of Germany revised, to annex Danzig, to abolish the Corridor. He wanted to see his country as well armed as any other. But he believed it could be done through the League and in co-operation with his neighbours. He considered it to be advantageous to Germany to be a member of the League. He actually made her the first Great Power to sign the Optional

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Clause of the Hague Statute for the obligatory arbitration of every political dispute.

He obtained for his country a number of minor concessions, such as the early transfer of military control in Germany from the Inter-Allied Commission (which had its headquarters in Berlin) to the League. He raised the Reich from a position of inequality and thereby prepared the way for the peaceful revision of the Peace Treaty. These were his great services to the State. But he never entirely regained among German chauvinists the ground which he lost at the outset by renouncing the struggle in the Ruhr, just as the Weimar Republic never could quite recover from having accepted the Treaty of Versailles. There is a crudely unforgiving quality in the German character which will never allow a man or an institution to outlive its mistakes. When his opponents achieved power a few years after his death his persistent endeavours to improve the status of Germany were forgotten, his memory was dishonoured and his supporters were persecuted.

The final evacuation of the occupied Rhineland five years before the moment prescribed in the Peace Treaty was carried out a few months after he died, in accordance with the procedure which he had arranged at The Hague with Mr. Henderson, who had succeeded Austen Chamberlain as Foreign Secretary. He had begun the work of modifying the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, which has been the *leitmotiv* of German policy ever since the day of its signature.

## CHAPTER III

### DR. BRÜNING

HIS work was taken up, after a short interval, by a man of different temperament, but of even more steadfast aim. Dr. Brüning, who became Chancellor in 1930, was as ascetic as Stresemann had been Rabelaisian, and deadly earnest rather than versatile. He saw few persons beyond those with whom he came professionally into contact, and seldom went farther afield in search of exercise or company than the garden of his official residence. Intellectually he was the equal if not the superior of his predecessor, and he possessed a better technical knowledge of the economic difficulties which were even then beginning to strangle Germany. Though an effective parliamentary orator he possessed none of the popular arts of the politician. A deeply religious Roman Catholic, he had great firmness of character, an austere devotion to duty and the highest standards of public conduct. For two years he ruled the country with an iron hand, imposing one unpopular economic restriction after another, and summoning the Reichstag merely to act as a ratifying assembly. He introduced to German political life, in fact, some of the methods afterwards exploited by Hitler, but on a free and voluntary basis. The Reichstag met for a few days only, after intervals of months; but it could reject as well as approve; and Dr.

Brüning also started the labour camps for unemployed young men of all classes; but nobody was compelled to attend them against his will.

### *The Anschluss*

Abroad he addressed himself at once to the task of carrying further the improvement in his country's position which had been begun by Stresemann; and he turned first to the problem of extending the economic frontiers of Germany. He tried to make a beginning by forming a close commercial union with Austria.

Dr. Brüning was no diplomatist, nor was his Foreign Minister, Dr. Curtius. They both realized that the project would certainly incur the opposition of France, and probably also of other governments, for political reasons; and so they determined to proceed as secretly as possible. At that time M. Briand's plan for an economic union of Europe was before the League, and during its discussion at Geneva the delegate of Austria suggested that the formation of regional agreements might be a useful beginning. Without winning any general approval for the suggestion, the Austrian Government followed it up by initiating conversations with Dr. Curtius at the beginning of 1931; and in March the terms of a proposed Customs Union were announced from Vienna.

Their publication produced an immediate protest from France, Czechoslovakia and Italy, whose resentment was undoubtedly sharpened by the manner in which the agreement had been reached. The two

German Governments gave the appearance of wishing to steal a march on the others, for they were equally engaged with them in trying to find a basis for a common European policy. If Germany and Austria had at least waited to see whether the general effort would succeed or fail – most people thought from the first it would fail – they would, in the event of failure, have had a good reason to achieve a local and particular arrangement. But German diplomacy – not for the first or the last time – spoilt a good case by that sort of over-cleverness which is first cousin to clumsiness.

Moreover, the Anschluss, or political union of Austria and Germany, was forbidden in the Peace Treaties; and it was a natural assumption that the economic was intended to lead to a political agreement. Furthermore, Austria, which had been in financial straits ever since the War, had already bound herself, as a condition of help received from the League of Nations, ‘to abstain from any negotiations or from any economic or financial engagement calculated directly or indirectly to compromise Austrian independence’, and not to ‘violate her economic independence by granting to any State a special regime or exclusive advantages calculated to threaten this independence’. This second proviso gave the British Government a good technical reason for proposing, at the instance of Mr. Henderson, the policy which was adopted by the nations of the League – that the legality of the proposed Agreement should be referred to the Hague Court. Dr. Curtius further prejudiced opinion against

Germany by objecting to this course – though he had the good and solid argument behind him that very few international changes can be made without the modification of a treaty, and a legal Court can have no basis on which to form its decision except the unmodified treaty or other legal contract. His consent, and that of Austria, was, however, ultimately obtained, and the Permanent Court of International Justice at The Hague ruled that the proposed course was illegal. The decision was reached only by a majority of one vote in fifteen. The minority of seven – those who considered the Austro-German proposal legal – were, in addition to the German member of the Court, the judges appointed from the United States, Great Britain, Japan, China, Holland and Belgium – those countries in fact which might be regarded as being relatively disinterested in the matter; whereas the French view was supported by the Italian, Polish, Spanish, Rumanian and three Latin-American judges. The identity of the opinions of these arbiters with the known sympathies of their governments – for at that time Latin-American States used almost always to follow France at Geneva – increased German mistrust of the impartiality of the League of Nations, and also did much to discredit the League in general and the Hague Court in particular in the United States of America.

But before the decision of the Court had been rendered the project had been abandoned by the Austrian Government. Its financial position was particularly weak at the moment, and there is not the slightest

doubt that France exercised every possible pressure to obtain Austria's renunciation of the projected Customs Union as a condition of receiving further essential financial help.

Even on legal grounds the outcome was not very satisfactory. On political and economic grounds it was deplorable.

The action of Austria and Germany accorded with the principle of self-determination, and was also an attempt to modify treaties by peaceful means. The greatest hope which the League created for Europe was that political change could be effected without war. Half the wars of the last century were caused by refusal of the possessing Powers to consider the claims of the unpossessing. The *status quo* had become an axiom of diplomacy, and even normal changes of growth could only be brought about by the use of force. Writing of the great work of Garibaldi in promoting Italian unity, for instance, G. M. Trevelyan says: 'This profound and permanent change in the European polity was effected contrary to the expectations and wishes of nearly all the rest of Europe,' and again: 'Italy could never have been liberated (from Austria) without one European war at least.' The primary cause of the Great War itself was the refusal of the Habsburg Monarchy to grant real autonomy to its subject races, or to consider the union of the Yugoslav race in any form; and one great gain of the Peace of 1919 was thought to be the inclusion of Article XIX in the Covenant, whereby treaties were made modi-

fiable by the League. This vital aspect of the Austro-German claim was ignored by European diplomacy. Short-sighted fears of German aggrandizement paralysed thought. Even by the few who considered the possibility of an ultimate change, the methods of the two governments were condemned as reprehensible, and the moment was said to be unfavourable. It must certainly be admitted that the approach of the claimants was furtive, and that they would have done better to have appealed boldly to the League under Article XIX; but it is equally true, as they well knew, that they would not have had the smallest chance of getting their claim considered. And the moment chosen was the most favourable that has occurred. The economic union of Europe was on all men's lips. Dr. Brüning was genuinely concerned first and foremost by the anarchic commercial balkanization of Europe, and believed a small beginning towards the re-creation of a Danubian economic unity could be made via Austria. Moreover, the Chancellor drew most of his support in Germany from the well-organized Centre Party, which enrolled under his banner almost the whole Roman Catholic community of the Reich. He was the Minister of South and West Germany rather than of Prussia. To his followers Austria was a co-religionist as well as a co-racial State. The expansion of the Reich – if political expansion followed – would have connoted an increase in the power of its moderate, devout, law-abiding element. The numerical and territorial enlargement of Germany –



the prospect of which seemed to numb the freedom of thought of all Continental statesmen except M. Briand – would have been partly offset by the re-inclusion of Vienna in the German realm, and by the encouragement of particularism among the minor German States. The federal idea might have prospered in Central Europe. Vienna is the traditional capital of Germany, and still exerts a magnetic glamour over half the German race. States like Bavaria were, at least until a few years ago, turning towards it a more sympathetic gaze than towards Berlin, and might possibly, in the period immediately after the War, have come out openly for closer union with the Tirol and Austria, if the French Government had not foolishly encouraged the movement for it which had begun in Munich.

The union of their whole race is a permanent aim of the German peoples; and it is in accordance with the professions of the Allies for self-determination. If union is achieved now, it will be achieved under a different form. Since 1931 the Reich has been conformed to the Nazi standard by Hitler. Particularism has been destroyed; and the amalgamation of Austria and Germany would now constitute the triumph of Nazi influence instead of a victory for the decent Germanism of Dr. Brüning.

*The London Conference, 1931*

One other opportunity of facing the conflict between the haves and the have-nots in a bold and comprehen-

sive manner occurred – or might have been created – in that same year, 1931. The ‘economic blizzard’ which was sweeping over the world was naturally felt most keenly by the financially weakest countries; and the state of Germany became a matter of anxious concern. Complete collapse there would have sharp repercussions in other countries and especially in those which had been lending her large sums of money. President Hoover had proposed a moratorium in reparation payments, and the British Government had called a meeting in London for July to discuss its application. All the principal ministers of the Reparation countries were to attend; and the American President was so impressed by the seriousness of the European situation that he instructed his Secretary of State, Mr. Stimson, who was touring Europe, to proceed to London for the conference. M. Laval attended for France, Mr. MacDonald and his Foreign Secretary, Mr. Arthur Henderson, represented Great Britain, and Dr. Brüning and Dr. Curtius came from Berlin. Public opinion was at that time well ahead of official opinion in realizing that muddled finances were not the only, perhaps not even the main cause of European unrest, and that so good an opportunity to talk over fundamental difficulties with a weak Germany might not recur. In a series of leading articles *The Times* pointed out that feeling was running very high in the Reich on the subject of revision of treaties, and that neither could the matter be indefinitely postponed nor would it be solved merely

by the lapse of time. 'Some day,' it wrote, 'these larger issues will have to be faced . . . and the opportunity is now and here.' In an article entitled 'Palliative or Cure', which obtained an immediate response from public opinion, it was argued that the time had come to examine the grievances of Germany firmly and with an open mind, and 'to judge how much in them may be valid, how much unfounded'. The presence of Dr. Brüning was 'a warrant of the moderation and good faith of the policy of Germany to-day', but his position was being challenged by extremists. 'It is quite futile to contend,' *The Times* continued, 'that the National-Socialist movement represents simply the vapid fulminations of irresponsible agitators'; and their 'deep dissatisfaction was shared by millions of sober and law-abiding citizens', for, though twelve years had passed since the War ended, the relations between Germany and France were 'in certain definite respects' those of vanquished to victors.

But this relationship of the two countries was, unfortunately, extremely welcome to France; and the British Government was unwilling or unable to persuade its French colleagues that their view was extremely short-sighted, that it was impossible to keep a great country like Germany for ever in a subordinate position, and that the only result of not coming to terms with Germany while she was still comparatively unarmed would be that the reckoning would come when she was powerful. The London Conference, in the manner of post-War diplomacy, gave no more

than a few days to its deliberations, and its paltry result was a decision to recommend the leading banks in the principal countries concerned to exercise all their influence to prevent further credits from being withdrawn from Germany – a decision which, as *The Times* observed, ‘might have been taken a week ago and without a conference’.

The chief responsibility for this failure of statesmanship must fall upon M. Laval; but the British Government then, as in the critical years that immediately followed, showed a lamentable incapacity to speak frankly to Paris. If we had had one British statesman who could speak to France in the same quiet but absolutely determined manner as Lord Allenby spoke to M. Picot after the capture of Jerusalem, the European structure might by now have been standing on surer foundations than massed armaments. Lord (then Mr.) Snowden did so once, but that was a financial and not a political occasion.

## CHAPTER IV

### DISARMAMENT

THE point of focus for the inequality of which Germany complained was armaments. The attempt to carry out Article VIII of the Covenant (enjoining general limitation of armaments at the lowest point consistent with national safety and the enforcement by common action of international obligations) was becoming the engrossing and indeed all-absorbing topic of discussion at Geneva, and in the diplomatic Chanceries all over the world; and by an unfortunate paradox the armed forces of each country came to be thought of as the expression of its sovereignty and the measure of its prestige and power. The subordinate and inferior position of Germany was thus emphasized; and it becomes necessary to examine this many-sided problem in so far as it affected the relations of Germany with other countries.

The Preparatory Disarmament Commission, sitting intermittently for four years in the conservatory-lounge of the hotel which then served as headquarters of the League, brought out the tangled complexity of the issue and its wide ramifications, and in the end produced a Draft Convention, which, owing to the reservations made by many countries, drew as much attention to differences as to similarities of outlook.

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The spirit that governed its discussions was indicated by the deep suspicion with which the activity of the German representative was regarded. It has already been mentioned that Count Bernstorff was among the most regular of its speakers, and was fertile in advocacy, protest and suggestion; yet by many his energy was attributed not at all to a zeal for disarmament but to the desire of Germany to get the proceedings over as quickly as possible in order that she might gain her liberty to rearm.

### *Clandestine Rearmament in Germany*

Nor can it be denied that evidence was plentiful from inside the Reich that this desire existed, and that every possible subterfuge was being employed to evade the disarmament clauses of the Peace Treaty. The Inter-Allied Commission of Control reported privately from Berlin that the intention to maintain in cadre, and restore ultimately to its former position, the old army was unmistakable. Numbers above the authorized 100,000 long-service men were being obtained by passing recruits out as soon as they were fully-trained soldiers, on the ground of ill-health, and enlisting others in their places. So-called 'Security Police' were being trained by methods so similar to those of the Reichswehr that the Commission considered them to form second-line troops; for purposes of pension, indeed, service in the army or in the *Sicherheitspolizei* counted identically and interchangeably. The budget appropriations for non-commissioned officers —

## LOCARNO

then open to Inter-Allied examination – formed a disproportionate amount of the military expenditure, and their establishment was given as little less than half the (supposed) total of 100,000 men. There were in fact numerous indications that the long-service army was regarded mainly as a cadre round which a permanent peace force of at least 300,000 could be built. It was also reported that, of the arms destroyed under the eyes of the Control Commission, most of the guns were, very naturally, those which had had their bores worn smooth, and much of the surrendered ammunition was obsolete or obsolescent. Industrial mobilization was being planned in such a way as to make possible the maximum expansion of war-material in the minimum of time. Some of the big armament firms had sent their designs and castings down the Rhine into Holland. A German gas factory had been set up in Russia.

By a possibly mistaken policy of consideration for the feelings of successive German Governments, which, in the disturbed state of the country, were considered to be only indirectly responsible for these military irregularities, the evasions, vouched for by the Inter-Allied Commission and supplemented by independent proof in the hands of the British and French Governments, were never published. Yet they showed the secretiveness of German methods and the deceptive nature of German assurances – a characteristic which, be it said, ought always without fail to be borne in mind when dealing with the Reich, even under the

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best of governments. False returns were being rendered; and misleading statements were being made, such as, for instance, that no General Staff existed, as enjoined by the Treaty of Versailles. There was, in fact, an exact equivalent of a General Staff.

But though these facts were never made public, they were embodied in what the French Government called its *dossier formidable*, and were pretty well known to delegates at Geneva. And that was before the Disarmament Conference proper had begun its deliberations.

### *The Disarmament Conference*

Nevertheless, when the Conference held its opening meeting, on February 8th, 1932, Germany was still represented by Dr. Brüning; and none who heard his speech on the following day could doubt his personal sincerity. He put the case for German equality as resolutely as any spokesman for the Reich who came after him; but he made it clear – and in this respect also he was followed later by Herr Hitler – that he did not expect immediate equality of total armed strength. He wanted only a moderate increase and he hoped that the armaments of others would diminish. In the meantime, he demanded absolute equality of *footing* for Germany. It was an impossible position for her that certain weapons – e.g. tanks, big guns and military aeroplanes – should be altogether prohibited. That was to keep her in a different and lower category, and would not be tolerated. In private conversations



he pleaded for the right to build a few 'samples' of the forbidden weapons. He said that the financial condition of his Government rendered heavier expenditure on armaments undesirable, and that the financial reason could be used to explain to his critics the need for keeping the number of tanks and big guns at a low figure. His difficulties with his own military people were manifest. But he himself was primarily concerned with the economic embarrassment of his country; and at that time he enjoyed the support of both the Reichstag and President Hindenburg. The financial straits of Germany, and indeed of many countries, might be turned into a decisive argument for the general reduction of expenditure on armaments, or they might be turned to more facile account by suggesting the relief of unemployment by the increased manufacture of the weapons of war.

Europe wavered between the two alternatives. At the instigation of the Italian Government, represented by Signor Grandi, an arms truce was agreed to for one year from November 1931. It seems to have been kept, even in Germany, for that period. But what was meant to be the merest introduction to the business of disarmament was destined to be the only tangible result of the movement for limitation on land and in the air.

### *First Phase of the Conference Concluded*

The first phase of the Disarmament Conference was concluded on July 23rd, 1932. The debates had shown

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that one of the principal obstacles to progress was the superabundance of points to be regulated. Every delegation could produce its plan, and raise its objections to the plan of every other delegation. The proposals ranged from the abolition of fortresses and capital ships to the protection of civilian populations, and from the prohibition of aeroplane landing-decks to the definition of the military term 'effectives'. A Resolution was adopted in which the assembled delegates of sixty States reaffirmed their aims, and defined their primary objective as being 'to reduce the means of attack' – by which was meant to limit for every country the weapons of offence. The tanks which could break through field fortifications and the guns which could destroy more permanent defensive systems were first to be reduced in number and ultimately to be renounced altogether. All bombing planes were to be abolished. Thus the comparative power of defence was to be increased, and the principle of the Kellogg Pact reinforced. Arms, armies, and air forces would be effective in defence, but not in attack. The line of progress was sound; but the July Resolution contained one serious defect. It omitted all mention of the German claim to equality.

### *The German Claim to Equality*

A new German Government took the matter up in a Note to the President of the Conference in September. Brüning had failed. He had pursued his effort

to get the principle of equality recognized through the diplomatic Chanceries as well as in Geneva, but in vain. He had been dropped by President Hindenburg in the early summer of that year, primarily on an internal question; and Herr von Papen was called to office at the head of a Government of the Right, composed chiefly of Nationalists, Junkers and soldiers. The new Chancellor at once made it clear that his Government could take no further part in the Conference unless the principle of equality was recognized.

*Sir John Simon*

Again British public opinion was ahead of the British Government, and as events proved, wiser in its estimate of the importance of the German claim. Sir John Simon had been appointed Foreign Secretary in Mr. MacDonald's second National Government. A man of brilliant talents, he was yet not well fitted for this particular office. I had numerous conversations with Sir John Simon, for whose accessibility I shall always be grateful to him, and for whose abilities I had and have a very great respect. But he did not seem to me to possess the qualifications necessary for the direction of foreign policy. The first of them, surely, is that he should be conversant with foreign affairs. Sir John Simon had no first-hand knowledge of them. Nor had he the right temperament. With him the intangible did not count; and half a diplomatist's work is concerned with tendencies and prejudices.

His cool, calculating brain was a logical instrument of the finest calibre; but he lacked understanding of the differing foreign mentalities, or of the various effects which his words and actions would produce upon them. He was indefatigable at mastering detail, and could grasp and brilliantly set out the immediate points of the most complex problem. But his main concern seemed to be to satisfy the public opinion of the moment and to get safely through the next debate in the House of Commons; and in this he was fairly successful owing to his remarkable talent for controversy and exposition. He was impelled to adopt these quotidian methods by his own nature and endowments. He lived politically from day to day. He was in fact a brilliant parliamentarian, but devoid of that psychological insight and instinctively just valuation of incident without which no man can pretend to be a statesman. One of the first ingredients of statesmanship seems to me to have been admirably defined by G. M. Trevelyan. 'There come rare moments,' he writes, 'hard to distinguish but fatal to let slip, when caution is dangerous, when all must be set upon a hazard.' Sir John Simon, I believe, did not distinguish the important from the unimportant, or permanent values from ephemeral values. He did not recognize opportunities, if they came, as they usually do come, unexpectedly and incidentally. He allowed two or three vital occasions to slip, not for want of courage, with which he is plentifully endowed, and not for want of earnestness in the cause of disarmament,

which none who met him could doubt in him, but because he had not the natural aptitude for and knowledge of foreign affairs upon which alone self-confidence can be based; and without confidence in his own judgment no man can or should take a risk on behalf of his country. I shall indicate the occasions when I believe that prompt and bold action by Great Britain would certainly have achieved definite if limited results in mitigating the competition in armaments in Europe.

*Sir John Simon's Mistakes*

The first mistake of the new Foreign Secretary occurred in the month which we have reached in our narrative, September 1932. He then composed a dispatch to Berlin to meet the claim for equality. It was a cleverly worded document, advancing a series of legal arguments to show that the Disarmament Section of the Treaty of Versailles could only cease to be binding upon Germany by international agreement, and that Germany would not be automatically entitled to the abrogation of that Section either by the conclusion of a new Disarmament Convention, or by the failure of the Conference to conclude one. In other words, whether the Conference succeeded or failed, the Reich would still legally be bound by the unilateral arms limitations of the Peace Treaty. Only at the end of the British 'Memorandum' did the Foreign Secretary make some general observations upon equality of

status. He forbore to commit himself, but he hinted that the present inequality was not intended to be maintained indefinitely.

These well-phrased legalities, which it seemed to have given the Foreign Secretary the keenest delight to set forth in logical array, were precisely calculated to inflame German opinion by tying the country down more tightly than ever with the bonds of the Versailles Treaty; and they gave the greatest encouragement to Herr Hitler's Party, still in opposition, which argued with increasing confidence that nothing would be obtained by merely asking for it. Commenting on the Memorandum, *The Times* suggested that the question of equality was far the most important and urgent of the moment, that action would be more valuable than this long string of 'observations and comments' – as Sir John Simon defined his own dispatch – and that the action might take the form of a definite promise to Germany that any restrictions upon arms which should not within a certain period be imposed upon all countries should no longer be valid in her case. 'It seems to be in the highest degree desirable', *The Times* wrote, 'that the clauses in Part V (Disarmament) of the Versailles Treaty which may be found to be inconsistent with the terms of the new Disarmament Convention' should be abrogated as soon as the new Convention came into force.

In November Sir John Simon tried again, and this time he announced that the Disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles would be 'entirely superseded'

by the Convention which the Conference was to frame; and he acknowledged that the same kinds of arms must be allowed to Germany as to other countries. The German Foreign Minister, Freiherr von Neurath, once said to me, 'You English are always rather late, Mr. Kennedy', and many times have I felt the justice of his remark in regard to our foreign policy. What Sir John Simon announced to be British policy in November would have been invaluable in September. But during those two months the mischief had been done in Germany. Nobody has ever exploited the mistakes of his opponents more effectively than Herr Hitler. The 'moderate' German Governments were shaken to their foundations. The Nazis grew more confident. Von Papen fell, and General von Schleicher succeeded him.

In December Mr. MacDonald went to Geneva and obtained acceptance of a Declaration by Great Britain, France, Germany, Italy and the United States in favour of 'equality of rights in a system which would provide security for all nations'. The new German Chancellor thereupon agreed that the delegate of the Reich should resume his attendance at the Disarmament Conference. But General von Schleicher's own days were numbered. At the beginning of the following year (1933) he was dispossessed by Hitler. The last three months of the pre-Hitler period had been fiddled away in finding a formula.

PART THREE

HITLER





## CHAPTER V

### DISARMAMENT (*continued*)

HERR HITLER was at first too much engaged in consolidating his position at home to give very much attention to foreign affairs, and his attitude for about eighteen months was moderate and adaptable. His ultimate objective was indeed perfectly plain, for it had been stated with remarkable candour in his *Mein Kampf*, which will be examined later. He wanted to reverse as much as possible of the Treaty of Versailles, and he desired the aggrandizement of Germany. But Hitler is a brilliant opportunist, who measures carefully the strength of his antagonists and times his actions well. For a considerable period he was ready to co-operate with other countries, and especially with Great Britain and Italy. He retained as his Foreign Minister Freiherr von Neurath, who had acted in that capacity for Herr von Papen and General Schleicher, and he maintained at Geneva the German delegate to the Disarmament Conference, Herr Nadolny.

About this time (in March 1933) I had the honour of being invited<sup>1</sup> to lunch alone with the Prime Minister, Mr. Ramsay MacDonald, to discuss Disarmament. At a table in the guest-room of the Athenaeum he spoke to me in a crisp, clear, and highly realistic manner about the affairs of Europe – in remarkable contrast to the ‘woolliness’ in which he often clothed

<sup>1</sup> Through the good offices of Mr. Geoffrey Dawson.

his public utterances, and which was so noticeable in the big speech he delivered at Geneva only a week later. To me he showed the greatest scepticism as to the success of the Disarmament Conference, but seemed determined to draw up some sort of ambitious plan, which would at least have the effect of placing upon those who did not accept it the appalling responsibility for the rearmament which would follow its breakdown.

Now anybody who had watched the proceedings at Geneva throughout with an unprejudiced eye (as it had been my duty to do on behalf of my paper) must have reached the conclusion that no far-reaching agreement upon land and air armaments was possible. I had therefore come to my meeting with the Prime Minister armed with a short memorandum, giving the few but important points upon which I believed agreement was attainable. I started from the assumption that the main objective should be the elimination of *competition*, by extension of the principle of limitation, already (in the Washington and London naval treaties) applied to ships and their guns, to all arms in all countries. I suggested five essential points:<sup>1</sup>

1. No more tanks, guns or submarines to be built, even as replacements, above certain sizes to be agreed upon.

<sup>1</sup> I give my points *seriatim* partly to show that my criticism of the disarmament negotiations is not merely wisdom after the event; and it will be seen in the subsequent pages that a year later Hitler announced his readiness to agree to a restriction of armaments which would have included these points.

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2. Complete abolition of the use of the air-bomb, whether H.E. or gas.
3. International supervision in every country.
4. Every Government to acquire powers to control export of arms over its frontiers.
5. The principle to be established that armies, fleets and air forces were to be trained only for defensive and police purposes, and that, apart from limited long-service troops for duty overseas, the normal training period for soldiers should be twelve months—thus the militia system, as practised in Switzerland, would gradually be introduced everywhere.

I underlined that it was essential to allow Germany to build the forbidden weapons at once, up to the sizes to which all countries were going to restrict themselves. Especially should she be permitted immediately to build anti-aircraft guns and fortifications.

It was indeed almost childish to suppose that Germany would consent much longer to go without the purely defensive apparatus of anti-aircraft guns and fixed fortifications. And almost any regulated rearmament would obviously be preferable to the unregulated rearmament which must inevitably follow the total failure of the Disarmament Conference.

In any case I concluded my memorandum with an earnest plea that the principle of *limitation* should be established while there was yet time, leaving *reduction* to follow later in more favourable circumstances.

Mr. MacDonald thrust my memorandum into his

pocket. Whether he ever looked at it again I do not know. The only comment he made at the time was: 'We are including all those points.' I understood what he meant when he produced the British Draft Convention eight days later at Geneva. It did include the points I had enumerated. But it swamped them. There were ninety-six points altogether. And in the rather confused speech with which Mr. MacDonald introduced the British Draft he emphasized the fact that substantial reductions of armaments were envisaged and that there was to be no rearmament anywhere. I remember that I also made my plea for a controlled provision of the prohibited weapons for Germany to Mr. Henderson, and he made the rejoinder: 'I am presiding over a *disarmament* Conference, not a *rearmament* Conference.' Both men preferred the clichés of the League of Nations Union to the promptings of reason or the modest demands of common sense.

The British Government at this stage frequently claimed that it was giving a lead to the Conference, but its activity could be more accurately described as that of a manager, not a leader. Its Draft Convention contained little original thought. Our Government took the proposals made by the various delegations and put them into some sort of order. It tried to reduce them to manageable proportions. That would have indeed been a useful achievement. But it failed. The detailed views of sixty nations were not resolvable into a set of clauses, even ninety-six of them.

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Once when I was seeing Sir John Simon he wrote down for me, in order, I suppose, that I might the better remember them, the words: 'Achievement depends upon agreement.' The British Government in fact took the view that all countries must reduce their arms, or none – though in practice it showed itself ready to be the only Government that substantially did reduce them.

### *From the Practical to the Ideal*

I believe that it made a double mistake. Some results could have been achieved – and the point is worth making, for the chance may conceivably recur to make a fresh beginning – if the British Government had maintained its own strength and prescribed modest but definite limitations of future construction in conjunction with other leading nations, especially those with whom we are geographically connected. It has been the tradition of British methods in general, and of Conservative statesmanship in particular, to work from the practical to the ideal, rather than from the ideal to the practical. Mr. MacDonald, Sir John Simon and Mr. Henderson departed from that sound principle, and tried to produce a perfect scheme to fit all nations from the start. They adopted the Socialist preference for a universal panacea; they had probably the majority of the public behind them; and for a while the organization of aspirations passed for statesmanship.

Yet the evidence of such successes as had been recently achieved by international diplomacy supported an opposite view. The Washington and London naval agreements, the Conferences of Ottawa and Locarno had all been partial and regional in scope and character, and had rendered valuable service to the stability and economy of the world. After the War the short and simple Convention of Washington prevented the frightful waste of nations constructing 45,000-ton battleships against each other, and in spite of subsequent impairments of the naval treaties in other respects the qualitative restrictions have survived until to-day. The last naval treaty (of 1936) avoids doctrinaire discriminations and invidious distinctions between nations, but reasserts the limits to the sizes of ships and of guns, which are the same for each and of equal benefit to each. Something of the sort might have been done in land armaments if the British Government had opted resolutely at Geneva for this method. And results might have been obtained if it had strongly supported the proposals which were made on these lines a year later by Herr Hitler.

### *Germany's Second Withdrawal from the Conference*

Before those proposals were made the German delegate had once more been withdrawn from Geneva. The actual occasion was an Anglo-French meeting in Paris on the eve of a resumption of the Disarmament discussions. Hitler was particularly sensitive to the

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partiality of British Ministers to hold bilateral and semi-private conferences in Paris before they attended the full Conference in Geneva, and German opinion was especially irritated on this occasion (October 1933) because it emerged semi-officially from the Paris meeting that the French and British Governments had agreed that a sort of probationary period was necessary for Germany before they could in practice limit their own armaments, and during that period Germany was once more to submit to inspection of armaments on her territory. The reasons officially given by Germany for withdrawal were that the 'highly armed States' were clearly unwilling to carry out their 'contractual' obligation to disarm, and that Germany's claim to equality was thereby rendered impossible of satisfaction. The President of the Conference did not accept these reasons as valid. It is probable in any case that the withdrawal was pre-meditated, and that Hitler chose the moment of a lapse on the part of his opponents to put through that part of his purpose and throw the blame upon them — a favourite device of Hitlerian policy. Dictators, moreover, do not like conferences, especially conferences which are attended by a host of minor Powers. Herr Hitler, too, is a man who likes to take the lead if he wants to put a matter through; and he was in fact preparing to lead in the matter of disarmament.

About the turn of the year, 1933-34, the British Government came to realize the impotence of the Disarmament Conference, and especially its inability



to deal with the major political issues – notably a scheme ‘to guarantee security’ – which formed the background of the discussions. It therefore instructed Mr. Eden, then Lord Privy Seal, to undertake a special mission to the most important European governments, for the purpose of reconciling their views upon the terms of a first Disarmament Convention. Eden went to Berlin, Rome and Paris, to engage the ‘parallel and supplementary’ efforts of diplomacy in support of the Conference. His tour coincided with the formulation of practical proposals by Herr Hitler. This direct approach produced by far the best opportunity of securing a limitation of armaments which Europe has yet known; and it was only lost by the obstinacy of the French Government and by the feeble unwillingness of the British Government to make any serious attempt to overcome that obstinacy.

I met Mr. Eden on his return from his round-journey and noticed how elated he was at the terms of Hitler’s proposals and how chagrined at the refusal of the French Government to entertain them. I called on him a few days later to ascertain exactly what Germany was ready to agree to, but he was unable to inform me; and the British public remained in ignorance of the details of Hitler’s proposals until they appeared in a White Paper which was published on April 19th – and which also contained M. Barthou’s rejection of them. But M. Barthou’s Note was only dated April 17th. Between January 29th, when the British Memorandum was drawn up constituting Mr.

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Eden's basis of negotiation on his European tour, and April 17th, the British Government failed entirely to take advantage of the close parallel between the German proposals and the provisional settlement to which by that time the British Government was in fact ready to agree.

### *Herr Hitler's Proposals*

Herr Hitler's offer was a good one. It contained every element necessary for initiating the limitation of the armaments of the principal European nations. He announced that Germany was ready to accept the equal regulation of national armaments by means of a Convention and international supervision. He said frankly that he realized the difficulties in the way of actual reduction by France of her material or personnel, and he did not ask for it before five years should have elapsed. During that period German inferiority would remain; but she would provide herself with all the weapons she considered necessary for defensive purposes. He wished her new army to have a strength of 300,000 short-service men – that is, he demanded the re-introduction of conscription, but was prepared to limit peace-strength to a total of effectives equal to that of France. He wished to possess – he meant to possess – interception aeroplanes, but excluded bombers if other countries were prepared to build no more. The Convention, he suggested, might run for ten years, and for its first five years he would agree that

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Germany's air strength should not exceed thirty per cent of the combined air forces of her neighbours or fifty per cent of the military aircraft possessed by France, whichever figure was the less. Germany was to attain equality with the principal Air Powers at the end of ten years. Herr Hitler also undertook to build only small tanks, and guns up to 6 in., while the heavier weapons were being gradually eliminated from the other Continental armies.

Combined with his readiness to allow international inspection in the Reich, the proposal was immensely valuable, for, even if doubts should be entertained as to the sincerity of his offer, neither the biggest tanks nor guns can be passed for service without being tried out, and the tests obviously cannot be carried out in silence or secrecy. Moreover, the Führer was actually prepared at that time to allow supervision to be applied to his para-military 'Storm-troops'. He agreed in writing that this Party militia should possess no arms and receive no instruction in arms. They would not be concentrated in military camps or instructed by officers of the Regular Army.

The international supervision of the Führer's own Storm-troopers was so startling a concession that it naturally caused considerable suspicion abroad. But the reason soon appeared. The Brownshirts had become restive since the success of the Nazi revolution; and their organizer, Captain Roehm, cherished the plan of amalgamating the small Reichswehr with his own superior numbers and making himself the leader

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of the whole of the German armed forces. Hitler had the good sense to prefer the ascendancy of the regular army, and was ready to call in foreign collaboration in keeping his disaffected followers in order. That proposal not having been adopted, he soon afterwards (on June 30th) purged his Party by the brutal and frightful method of killing off Roehm and all his principal supporters.

There were of course other reasons why France viewed the German proposals with suspicion. The budget figures for 1934, for instance, showed an increase of forty per cent in military expenditure, while the provision for 'Air transport and Air protection' was approximately trebled. The French Government considered, and with justice, that these figures for the Air indicated the determination of Germany to build a military air force, still forbidden by the Disarmament clauses of the Treaty of Versailles. But Hitler made no concealment of his resolve that Germany should be defensively armed in the air; and he proposed it in conditions which would have allowed French officers, as members of an international commission, to see what they could inside Germany. Even though it be admitted that the proper supervision of aircraft will always constitute a peculiarly difficult technical problem, the mere fact that the Commission had the right of entry would have been a deterrent; and its establishment would undoubtedly have been an immense step forward towards a sane international system.

The British Government had (somewhat reluctantly) agreed to allow international inspection of war material in the British Isles; and memoranda by the Belgian and Italian Governments proved that they were in general agreement with the British view at this time – which was that the first Disarmament Convention should provide for the reduction of the size of tanks and guns over a period of years, the establishment of international control, the possession by Germany of a conscript army, ‘the complete abolition of military and naval aircraft, dependent upon the effective supervision of civil aviation’, and ‘the principle of consultation in the event of a breach or a threat of a breach of the Disarmament Convention’.<sup>1</sup>

In the Italian Memorandum Signor Mussolini realistically pointed out that there was a danger ‘that the question of equality may be settled *de facto* without any check’; and this of course was perfectly recognized by Sir John Simon. On one of my visits to him I remember that he held his long arms upward and downward, as far apart as possible, his left hand above his head, his right near the floor. ‘Here,’ he said, indicating his left hand, ‘are the armaments of the victorious Powers; here’, indicating his right hand, ‘are those of Germany. If this hand (his left) can’t come down to where the other one is both must gradually come together’ – and he moved his hands till they met on a level with his chest. Nor have I any doubt that

<sup>1</sup> British Memorandum of January 29th, published February 1st, 1934.

he would have wished to give effect to his views. But he was obstructed by certain members of the Cabinet and by his own Foreign Office, which expressed disapproval of *The Times*' advocacy of the acceptance of the Hitler plan as soon as its terms were made known. Sir John Simon remained silent, as far as the public was concerned, until he escaped to Geneva for a meeting of the General Commission of the Disarmament Conference at the end of May. Then he spoke quite strongly in favour of the consideration of the German proposals. But as they had been summarily rejected by France a month before, the only result of his plea was that he got into trouble with M. Barthou.

*M. Barthou's 'No'*

M. Barthou's notorious 'No' of April 17th, is rightly regarded as marking the final failure of the Disarmament negotiations. In justice to that ill-starred politician it should be recorded that he had actually had in mind a more favourable reply to the German Government, but that the opposition of two or three prominent members of the French Cabinet caused him to reconsider his original Draft. The French General Staff (contrary to a widespread impression) was at that time in favour of the limitation of armaments, though it never pretended to countenance reduction. But it had demanded, and French public opinion had demanded, as a condition even of limitation, 'guarantees of security' which neither the British Government

nor British public opinion were ready to accord. By the beginning of that year (1934), however, it was generally realized in France that there was no hope of getting Great Britain to promise 'automatic' help in the event of the invasion of European frontiers – for it was the whole Versailles settlement which France had wished to see guaranteed; and a fresh British suggestion that the Disarmament Convention, rather than frontiers, should be guaranteed, was coming to be regarded as an acceptable alternative. This proposal was implied in the British Memorandum of January 29th, and it was to be accompanied by the promise of 'consultation' in the event of a breach or threat of breach of the Convention. The promise to consult, it must be admitted, meant little or nothing, because consultation between diplomatists and at Geneva is the normal procedure and needed no promise. It was not indeed surprising that the French Government had doubts as to the meaning or value of British guarantees at that time, especially as there was a loud clamour in a section of the Press against the fulfilment even of the Locarno obligations. Worst of all, the personality of the Foreign Secretary did not inspire confidence, for he seemed unable to stand firm amid conflicting opinions. On April 10th, instead of making positive proposals, he was still asking the French Government what they understood by 'guarantees of execution of the Convention'. A stronger man might have been able to deal more handsomely with the reasonable claims of Germany and to retain in

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greater measure the confidence of France – which is commonly the task of British policy. Sir John Simon combined almost servile deference to France with a refusal to give her any positive undertaking in regard to the future.

An immediate consequence of this lack of policy was that France did not feel strong enough to disarm and sought in the East the alliance which she could not obtain in the West. When M. Barthou consulted the British Government about his proposed 'Eastern Pact', he should have been severely discouraged; but clearly Sir John Simon was not in a position to dissuade him. Instead the British Foreign Secretary agreed that the proposed Treaty with Russia, which was the nucleus of the new Pact, did not run contrary to the Treaty of Locarno, and he pleaded that the Pact ought to be multilateral and include Germany.

Very brief inquiries in the capitals of the States concerned showed that neither the German nor the Polish Government was in the least likely to join the Pact; and the ultimate result has been that France has concluded what is virtually a defensive alliance with Russia, while the subsequent reactions of Germany to that alliance have created a defensive entente between Great Britain and France. A bolder and firmer policy in 1934 might have kept Russia out of Western Europe, and would almost certainly have involved no larger concessions to France than have now been forced upon us by circumstances. And at that time the concession could have been made as part of a bargain.



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Had British diplomacy been skilfully conducted France could almost certainly have been persuaded – to her own advantage – to accept the Hitler proposals as a basis of further negotiation. She was alone in Western Europe in her reluctance to consider them, and M. Barthou himself, as we now know, hesitated at first whether to accept or decline. If during the months of February, March and early April the British Prime Minister and Foreign Secretary had appealed to public opinion in favour of the German plan they would have met with an overwhelming response, for many other important organs of opinion besides *The Times* almost vehemently favoured it as soon as its terms became known in April. The elements in France which were ready for acceptance would have been encouraged, and the French Government must have been forced to abandon an invidious isolation, for it never ceased to profess a desire for an arms agreement. Hitler had, moreover, let it be known that he would return to Geneva if his Disarmament proposals were discussed there. The collaboration of Germany or her further isolation was the real issue at stake; and it was decided before the British public had been given the chance of understanding it. The failure to force that great opportunity was perhaps the lowest point of depression to which British diplomacy has sunk in recent history.

### *The Western Air Pact*

But even that melancholy record of mismanagement does not complete the tale of Sir John Simon's missed

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opportunities. The negotiations outside the Disarmament Conference were still assiduously conducted; and in February of the following year (1935) M. Laval and M. Flandin came to London and drew up an Agreement indicating the lines on which a 'general settlement' between Germany and the other Powers should be negotiated with the object of superseding the disarmament provisions of the Treaty of Versailles, and simultaneously proposing that a Western Air Pact should be 'promptly negotiated'. The first part of the Agreement covered the League of Nations, Central Europe, and the proposed Eastern Security Pact, and was somewhat vague; but the fourth item, the negotiation of an Air Convention between the five Western Powers – Great Britain, France, Germany, Belgium and Italy – was precise in character; and this specific proposal was separately conveyed, on the very evening on which the Franco-British Agreement had been signed (February 3rd), to the three States that had not been present in London.

The Air Convention was to be an amplification of the original Treaty of Locarno, which made no mention of aggression in the Air. 'Impressed by the special dangers to peace created by modern developments in the air', so ran the official *communiqué* of February 3rd, 'the misuse of which might lead to sudden aerial aggression by one country upon another', the Ministers of the two countries proposed an Air Locarno on a reciprocal basis, which – unlike the original Treaty – would have brought France and the other signatories

to the help of Great Britain as much as Great Britain to the help of France. The response of Italy and Belgium to the whole of the London programme was immediate and favourable. The reply of Germany – which followed a few days later – was friendly but imprecise in regard to the general settlement, but cordially favoured the proposed Air Convention. Within a fortnight, therefore, of the dispatch of the Franco-British invitation to negotiate an Air Convention ‘promptly’ – the word had not been employed in regard to the rest of the settlement – every one of the Governments approached had expressed its entire readiness to proceed with the matter at once.

But the distinction which the German Government had made between the general proposals and the specific plan of a Western Air Pact roused the deep and not unnatural suspicions both of France and of Russia, which by that time, in common with other European Governments, had been informed of the Franco-British Agreement. Russia has always been nervous lest a settlement with the Reich in Western Europe should make it all the easier for it to pursue predatory designs in the East. This view was shared by the French Government; and Moscow had therefore little difficulty in persuading France to modify her original suggestion of immediately negotiating the Air Pact and to insist, instead, that the whole of the London proposals should be regarded as indivisible and must be negotiated simultaneously. The British Foreign Office, as prone as ever to adapt itself to the wishes of

France, supported this new Franco-Russian interpretation of procedure. It was, furthermore, argued in Paris that Germany was trying to separate Great Britain from France, because the German Government had suggested, in its reply to the original Franco-British invitation, that, the negotiations between Great Britain and France having already taken place, the British Government might perhaps be ready to enter into direct negotiations with Germany; and the hope was informally expressed that a British Minister – or Ministers – might with advantage, for once, pay a visit to Berlin, and offset, as it were, the repeated interchange of visits between London and Paris.

In vain *The Times* argued that, even if French and Russian suspicions were warranted, whatever was negotiable should be negotiated. The idea of an Air Pact had actually first been put forward in that journal in June of the previous year. It had also been warmly advocated by many eminent publicists, particularly by Vernon Bartlett; but it had at first been turned down by the British Cabinet. In spite of the extension of the Locarno spirit which the proposal connoted, and in spite of the tremendous deterrent which the probability of retaliation by the four other parties to the Treaty must produce in the mind of a potential aggressor, the British Government only agreed to the proposal when France had rallied to it, and as promptly agreed to slacken its effort when France desired to go slow. There is very little doubt that if Sir John Simon had held the

French Government to the spirit and letter of the Franco-British Agreement of February 3rd a Western Air Convention would have come into force without delay, and the whole subsequent course of events in Europe might have been changed for the better. But instead of accepting the German invitation to go to Berlin Sir John Simon sauntered off to Paris at the end of the month, to deliver an address on a non-political subject, merely announcing that he might go to Berlin later. Never surely has there been a clearer example of what Shakespeare meant in his oft-quoted lines:

There is a tide in the affairs of men  
Which, taken at the flood, leads on to fortune;  
Omitted, all the voyage of their life  
Is bound in shallows and in miseries.

Sir John's successors at the Foreign Office, Sir Samuel Hoare and Mr. Eden, made gallant efforts to get the negotiations going again, but by that time the circumstances were no longer propitious. Germany had by then abandoned the attempt to modify the Treaty of Versailles by agreement, and resorted to the method of unilateral repudiation. It became obviously impossible for a while to expect other countries to sign treaties with a government which was engaged in tearing up a treaty. And Germany has since shown a growing predilection for a method which saves the trouble of negotiation, eliminates hampering conditions, and gratifies her peculiar sense of national pride.

## CHAPTER VI

# HITLERISM IN FOREIGN AFFAIRS

HITHERTO Hitler had confined the undiluted application of his methods of violence to home affairs. From now on, encouraged by their success at home, and irritated by the lack of response to more conventional usage abroad, he applied the full doctrine of Hitlerism to his foreign policy. He began by denouncing, on Saturday, March 16th, 1935, the military clauses of the Treaty of Versailles, and re-introducing conscription. He made it clear that he was only concerned to repudiate Part V (Disarmament) of the Treaty, and that he still regarded the rest of it as valid.

The Führer gave as his reason for proclaiming universal military service that the French Government had (on March 7th) extended the period of service in France to two years. He is known also to have been very much upset by a passage in the British White Paper, which was published on March 5th to justify a heavy increase of expenditure on armaments, because the British Government therein threw upon Germany the chief responsibility for the general process of rearmament that had begun in Europe.

It was not at all difficult to understand either Hitler's annoyance or his violent reaction, the form of which,

like his withdrawal from the Disarmament Conference, had no doubt been in his mind for some little time. He chose the extension of military service in France as a suitable excuse, and the week-end as a suitable moment, openly to defy the French and British Governments. But his action only really amounted to making a practical beginning towards obtaining that equality which he had always claimed and which other countries had granted in theory. His policy of arbitrariness might have been foreseen. It had in fact been obvious for some time that Germany would in the end obtain equality, and that if she could not obtain it by amicable agreement she would get it 'by a series of defiant acts on her part and of grudging concessions on the part of others'. (The words are quoted from *The Times* of February 20th, 1935.) There was therefore no cause for surprise. Germany had pleaded before the Preparatory Disarmament Commission, the Disarmament Conference, and in the diplomatic Chanceries through nine long years for an agreement based on equality, without having obtained foreign consent for her to build a fortress on her own territory or to possess a single anti-aircraft gun. In March of that year (1935) she took a right which every self-respecting nation regards as elementary.

The re-introduction of universal military service, moreover, meant the restoration to German national life of something that had more than military value. The Army was to Germans a university of comradeship and discipline, particularly valuable in a country where

regionalism was still strong, social differences clear-cut, and where public opinion is always prone to become anarchic when not directed from above. In the period of demoralization which followed the War, Germany suffered particularly from the diffusion of disintegrating ethical ideas; and the training of the drill-sergeant was the natural and the simplest corrective in the eyes of many Germans besides the National-Socialists. Herr Hitler's predecessor in the chancellorship, General Schleicher, had described conscription, which he also desired to introduce, as a school of 'discipline, modesty, and comradeship'. And it made a double appeal to the Nazis, who wished to make their nation both a classless State and an armed State.

About this time Hitler also announced that Germany possessed a military Air Force and was about to build submarines – both contraventions of the Treaty of Versailles.

Whatever there was to be said in extenuation, these open breaches of the Treaty naturally provoked a storm of indignation abroad, much more vehement in France than in England, but vehement enough here to create a sharp division of feeling between 'pro-Germans' and 'anti-Germans' – those who thought that Germany had not had a just settlement after the War, and was taking the only possible means to obtain it, and those who so profoundly mistrusted her that they considered she should be resisted and checked on every possible occasion.



*Sir John Simon's Visit to Berlin*

The unfortunate British Foreign Secretary did his best to agree with both views. Having refrained from accepting the German invitation to go promptly to Berlin and negotiate an Air Convention, when the visit might have been immensely valuable, he went there after the denunciation of Part V of the Treaty, when his mission could of course have no immediate result and when it was bound to give the impression that he meant to condone the violation of a treaty.

His visit to Berlin was paid on March 24th – a little later than arranged, on account of the indisposition of Herr Hitler – and was soon afterwards followed by a conference with France and Italy at Stresa. There Sir John Simon, still striving to fill a double role, agreed with the other governments in condemning Germany, but simultaneously got into touch with the German Government in order to inquire to what extent it might be ready to collaborate in a collective system. From Stresa the Foreign Secretary continued his journey to Geneva, where German action was again condemned – indirectly in a Council Resolution – and a 'Committee of Experts' was appointed to consider the possible methods of applying economic and financial sanctions against lawbreakers.

*Anglo-German Naval Agreement*

In the following summer Sir John Simon's period at the Foreign Office came to an end, and he was moved

to the Home Office by the new Prime Minister, Mr. Baldwin. But before he left Downing Street he gave a fresh turn to British policy. He authorized separate naval negotiations with Germany. During his March visit to Berlin – which thus sowed good seed between the two countries – Herr Hitler demanded the right to build a navy in excess of the limits imposed at Versailles, but not to exceed thirty-five per cent of the strength of the British Navy. Sir John soon afterwards agreed to this course; and Herr von Ribbentrop came to London for the negotiations. By June, when Sir John was transferred to his new post, this partial modification of the Treaty of Versailles had in its main lines been agreed upon; and under Sir Samuel Hoare the arrangement was concluded, with consequences which have so far operated to the benefit of both countries, and which are in course of being extended to others.

At the Home Office – to which *The Times* had some years before suggested his transfer – Sir John Simon found more scope for his remarkable gifts, which do not happen to be those most requisite to a Foreign Secretary. But for the relative negligibility of British policy abroad during his tenure of the Foreign Office and the drift towards catastrophe in Europe, much of the responsibility should properly be placed upon the Prime Minister who appointed him. Mr. MacDonald, for reasons of his own, preferred him to the sagacious and independent Lord Reading, who admirably filled the post during the brief period of the first National

Government in 1931. Sir John Simon completely lacked two essential qualifications of a Foreign Secretary – knowledge of his subject and an aptitude for long-range policy. His training had not equipped him for foreign affairs. The lawyer's habit of mind is never to look forward beyond the next case. To him each episode seemed to be detached from every other, and instead of controlling incident by policy, according to Napoleon's maxim, he allowed incidents to shape his policy for him. 'To have a policy' in diplomacy is surely to press steadily in a pre-determined direction, and to know how to turn to the furtherance of a settled purpose, so far as is humanly possible, the accidents of every day, and the actions of others, whether unexpected or foreseen. Sir John Simon did not appear to look into the future. He showed nothing of that 'auguring mind', so valuable to the statesman, of which Thomas Hardy speaks; and even his brilliant intellect could not immediately make up for his lack of personal experience and consequent over-dependence on the knowledge of his advisers. In the art of diplomacy instinct is more valuable than intellect; and a man's instinct is surest when it is based on his own knowledge and experience.

## CHAPTER VII

### ‘MEIN KAMPF’

#### *The German Mind*

ONE of the greatest difficulties which Sir John Simon had to encounter – which any Foreign Secretary has to encounter – in dealing with Germany was the want of confidence in German good faith which a close study of her history inspires, which is always vividly present in the minds of her neighbours on the Continent, and which has been accentuated by the doctrines preached by the National-Socialist Party. The principal tenet of Hitlerism is that the State comes first, and that the interests of the State override all other interests. Not only must individuals subordinate themselves completely to the national community – that habit of mind might with advantage be cultivated in some other countries – but ordinary standards of conduct are not held to be applicable to actions carried out in the name of the State. The State, in fact, can do no wrong. It can set aside moral scruples and religion itself. Whoever is doing the work of the State is acting rightly. A German who was favourable to the Nazi regime told me in Berlin that the reason why the Nazi S.S. (Special Guards) were discouraged from going to church was that they might in the regular practice of religion acquire conscientious scruples – and Hitler

wanted men round him who had no scruples whatever. Applied to foreign affairs, the doctrine encourages the belief that the breaking of a treaty is a virtuous act if the breach is in the interests of Germany. Referring to domestic law, Herr Hess, the Deputy Leader of the Party, and personally one of the most honourable of men, when he opened a Congress of Jurists in Leipzig in 1936, expounded the Führer's view that 'the law must be regarded by National-Socialism as an active servant of the community'. He quoted with approval von Treitschke's dictum that 'the practice of law is a political activity' and that 'a judge must give his judgment in accordance with the spirit and the history of a particular State'. Applying the theory to international law, Dr. Goebbels, when he addressed the jurists at the close of the meeting, said that because the Treaty of Versailles had 'clashed with common sense' the Führer had placed himself 'on a higher law of life for his own people and for Europe'.

Up to a point we may agree with Dr. Goebbels. British Law, like the British Constitution, is an organic growth, not an immutable code. And when he also said 'at the beginning of every revolution stands the deed, and when the new situation has been created it is the task of the law-givers to provide it with a sub-structure of law', he propounded a theory not altogether different from the French declaration at the beginning of the Revolution of 1789 that when conditions have become intolerable revolt against them becomes '*le plus sacré des devoirs*'. At least we cannot

deny that the responsibility for a political explosion, whether internal or external, must be shared by those who have refused to consider beforehand changes which afterwards, as a result of the explosion, come to be generally regarded as justified.

Nevertheless, the doctrine as applied to foreign affairs, and taken together with a certain tendency to duplicity in the North German character, is not only unsettling but dangerous. It is particularly dangerous when preached in conjunction with the crude nationalism of Herr Hitler. His doctrine has been unambiguously stated in *Mein Kampf*, which in a few years has attained an unparalleled circulation in Germany and has quite correctly been called the bible of the German people. It is not sufficiently known in England, for a full understanding of modern Germany is impossible without a study of the unexpurgated version. The English edition leaves out many of the passages most offensive to foreign nations. When an attempt was made to publish the full edition in France, Hitler's publishers took legal steps to prevent it, whereas in Germany Hitler refuses to have his book substantially curtailed or modified. He takes great pains – and this is a most important point – to diffuse certain ideas at home and different ideas abroad. He has an unbounded belief in the power of propaganda, and shows a master hand in directing it; and the mind of the German people is especially adapted to be influenced by authoritative direction. The German public may be compared to a well-read, industrious and

capable leader-writer, who comes to his newspaper office with a well-equipped but unprejudiced mind, relying upon the editor to give it impulse and direction. Some of the best leading articles are produced by this division of functions; and the unusual combination of docility with natural strength of mind and body in the German people makes them an ideal instrument in the hands of a determined ruler. They crave leadership. They are an elemental and herd-like community. Left to themselves, they stray in different directions. They disintegrate. They search round for a lead; they do not feel comfortable unless they are *zielbewusst* ('conscious of their goal'). Their views and even their convictions are adaptable. From close observation I have reached the conclusion that Germans really come to believe what they have been told to believe.

What they are told to believe at home, by the most effective propaganda machine in the world, is therefore of immense importance; and the next few pages must be devoted to a study of the teaching of *Mein Kampf* in so far as it bears directly or indirectly upon foreign policy.<sup>1</sup>

Herr Hitler's fundamental principles, as set forth in this work, which he wrote during the period of his imprisonment by one of the genuinely democratic governments of Germany, may be summarized as follows: Man is a fighting animal, and the nation is

<sup>1</sup> The domestic policy advocated by Herr Hitler in *Mein Kampf*, as well as the author's own early struggles and the origin of the National-Socialist Party, can best be studied in *My Struggle*, the abridged English translation published in the Paternoster Library.

therefore a fighting unit. Any living organism which ceases to fight for its existence is, he asserts, doomed to extinction. A country or a race which ceases to fight is equally doomed. The fighting capacity of a race depends on its purity. Hence the necessity for ridding it of foreign impurities. The Jewish race, owing to its universality, is of necessity pacifist and internationalist. Pacifism is the deadliest sin, for pacifism means the surrender of the race in the fight for existence. The first duty of every country is, therefore, to nationalize the masses; intelligence is of secondary importance in the case of the individual; will and determination are of higher importance. The individual who is born to command is more valuable than countless thousands of subordinate natures. Only brute force can ensure the survival of the race. Hence the necessity for military forms. The race must fight; a race that rests must rust and perish. The German race, had it been united in time, would be master of the globe to-day.

Herr Hitler's aim is the recovery for Germany of the place in the world to which her history, her past achievements, the capacity of her people and the size of her population entitle her. He argues throughout from the premise that Germany is a striking example of an Empire which has been built on the basis of a pure policy of power. Prussia, the cell which gave birth to the Reich, rose out of a 'glittering heroism, and not from financial operations or commercial affairs'. He says frankly that it is not enough to ask 'How shall we manufacture arms?' His avowed purpose is to create the



spirit which renders a nation capable of bearing arms.

He does not subscribe to the homely British philosophy of 'live and let live'. The greatest upheavals in history have been due to the driving force of fanatical and hysterical passions. 'Nothing could have been effected by the *bourgeois* virtues of peace and order,' he writes on p. 475.<sup>1</sup>

He has taught his Storm Troop leaders that, when reason fails, 'the last decision belongs to violence and that the best defensive weapon is the attack' (p. 550).

He often refers to peace as though it were more dangerous to the health of the nation than war. On p. 773, for instance, he writes that 'the healthiest organisms' have often grown out of the bloodiest civil wars; whereas from artificially preserved peace conditions 'the stink of putrefaction has more than once arisen to heaven'. And elsewhere he declares that 'eternal peace would lead humanity to the tomb'.

He revives the pre-war doctrine of pan-Germanism, and regards it as a sacred duty to assure to the German people 'the territory which is its on earth'; and action to that end 'is the only one which, before God and before our German posterity, can justify the shedding of blood.'

### *Territorial Expansion*

He exhorts his people to make territorial expansion their aim. There are still, he says, immense tracts of

<sup>1</sup> My page references apply equally to the 1925 and 1936 editions of *Mein Kampf*.

unused land, which is only waiting to be exploited. This land was not kept by nature as territory reserved in the future for a special nation or race. Land is for the people who have the force to take it and the activity necessary to exploit it.

‘Nature knows no political frontiers.’ She puts humanity side by side on the globe and watches the free play of forces. ‘The most courageous and the most active, the darling child of nature, will obtain the noble right to live.’

Hitler dreads over-civilization. He feels that it offers supremacy to the races which are ‘of lower culture, but more energetic’.

He often suggests that England may be an ally in the German policy of expansion.

‘For such a policy [he writes on pp. 153 and 154] the only possible ally in Europe was England. It was only with England that we could, our rear being safeguarded, begin the new crusade of the Germans.’

He reaffirms the thesis, readily acceptable to Germany owing to her lack of natural geographical boundaries, that ‘the frontiers of Germany are fortuitous and temporary limits’. The boundaries of States, he says, are the work of men and are changed by them. The fact that a nation has succeeded in acquiring a territory in excess of its requirements in no way confers a superior obligation to admit that for ever. It is a demonstration rather of the force of the conqueror and the weakness of him who admits conquest. And it is in that force alone that right resides.

In language which closely resembles that of General Bernhardi in his book published before the War and entitled *World Power or Collapse*, Hitler calls Germany 'the mother of life, the mother of the whole present-day civilization'. 'Germany will be a world Power or she will be nothing,' he adds – the very echo of the voice of Bernhardi.

On pp. 741 and 742 he specifically mentions Russia and the border states of the Baltic as affording the most likely field for territorial expansion.

### *Foreign Policy*

Foreign policy must consist in working 'exclusively' for one's own nation, he says on p. 687 – an example of the contrast between what he teaches at home and preaches abroad. And in pursuit of the national aims 'all considerations of internal politics, religion, and humanity, in brief, every other consideration whatsoever must be pitilessly eliminated.'

Germans who live outside the present boundaries of the Reich are all assumed to be oppressed, and they will not be reincorporated in the mother country 'by inflamed protests, but by the vigorous blows of the sword'. To forge that sword is the sacred task of the Nazi Party.

Those Englishmen who entertain the idea of an alliance with Germany will do well to bear in mind Hitler's aphorism (on page 749) that 'An alliance, the aim of which does not comprise the intention to make

war, is meaningless and worthless’. Any alliance should, in fact, have as its object ‘to recognize and attack the most dangerous opponents of Germany’. These are quite frankly said to be France and Russia. On p. 757 he advocates the ‘striking down’ of France; and on p. 766 her ‘annihilation’. On p. 699 he declares that ‘the inexorable enemy of the German nation is and will always be France’.

### *League of Nations*

Here are a few of his remarks about the League of Nations, which are not reproduced in the English translation of *Mein Kampf*:

‘Was it not the German press which caused our people to sip at the folly of the Western democracy until, caught by all its enthusiastic tirades, it thought that it could entrust its future to a League of Nations?’ (p. 265).

‘The army was the school which still taught to each German not to seek the safety of the nation in deceitful phrases, inciting it to an international fraternization between negroes, Germans, Chinese, Frenchmen, English, etc., but in the force and spirit of decision of the people themselves’ (p. 306).

‘We must, however, be able to realize that we shall not be able to repossess the lost territories either by solemn invocations addressed to Providence, nor by

pious hopes based on a League of Nations, but only by force of arms' (p. 708).

'Just as the only German policy was wrongly determined by dynastic considerations, so we must beware in future of being led by the nonsensical feeling of a world community of peoples. In particular, we are not the policeman to protect the well-known "poor, small nations", but we are the soldiers of our own people' (p. 741).

### *Propaganda*

The cynicism of Hitler's views on propaganda is interesting. Discussing the part which it played in the collapse of Germany in 1918, he calls it 'a sound principle that the size of a lie is always a factor in the extent to which it is believed', for the broad masses of the people 'will more easily be corrupted in their innermost hearts than be consciously bad of their own accord'; and he continues: 'In the primitive simplicity of their minds they will fall a victim more easily to a big lie than to a small one, for they themselves generally only tell small lies, being too ashamed to tell big ones. Such untruthfulness would never occur to them, and they will not be able to believe in the possibility of such amazing impudence, such scandalous falsification, on the part of others. Indeed, even when they are enlightened, they will continue to doubt and hesitate, and at the very least they will still accept as true any explanation which is offered to them. Some part of the most impudent lie will always remain, something

will always stick – a fact which all great artists in lying and all associations of liars in this world know only too well and therefore put to shameful uses’ (pp. 252 and 253).

### *Education*

As in the other dictator-ruled countries, the child’s mind is to be a first care of the government.

‘The [educational] curriculum is to be planned along these lines, in such a way that the young person does not leave school half a pacifist or a democrat or what not, but as a full-blooded German’ (p. 474).

And here are some further precepts for the proper upbringing of German youth:

This racially determined education receives its final perfection in military science, which has to be regarded as the final stage of an average German’s normal education’ (p. 476).

‘Every child’s spelling-book, every newspaper, every theatre and cinema, every advertisement column and every hoarding must be pressed into the service of this one mission, until the timid prayer of our modern patriots, “Lord, deliver us!” has been transformed in the brain of the smallest boy into the burning demand, “Almighty God, bless our weapons; be just as thou always wast; judge now, if we deserve our freedom. Lord, bless our struggle” ’ (p. 715).

Every German teacher, writer, publicist and propagandist, every leader in the semi-military formations, and more recently (by special order of Dr. Goebbels) every artist has to make *Mein Kampf* the groundwork of his outlook on life (*Weltanschauung*). Whenever a thesis is written by a schoolchild, whenever a troop-leader of the Hitler Youth has to address his young followers, he is bound to take the teaching of *Mein Kampf* directly or indirectly as his guide. Anybody venturing to choose a line of his own would be regarded with suspicion. If he were young and aspiring he would afterwards look in vain for promotion; if he held a responsible position, he would certainly lose it. In the Labour Camps, too, the long winter evenings are filled in with lectures, 'on a patriotic subject', which I was given to understand meant the Nazi doctrine, and German history – but of course no strangers ever hear them.

Dr. Goebbels, as Minister for Propaganda, has boasted that he has produced *Einigkeit des Denkens* (unity of thought), and outwardly this is literally true. I have no doubt that millions of Germans still abhor the teaching of Hitler, but they keep quiet, because of the ruthless brutality with which opposition or criticism – or even independence – is habitually punished. Therefore the ideas of *Mein Kampf* are unchallenged in Germany to-day; and so far from having been whittled down, they have in some respects been accentuated. I have seen, in the textbooks and educational articles intended for school children, the 'i's' dotted and the 't's' crossed

in amplification of the Führer's theory of race and expansion. For instance, Strassburg, Vienna and other towns outside the Reich are mentioned in the book of instructions for S.A. troop-leaders as being German, and therefore, it is implied, as destined ultimately to belong to the new Reich. And although Hitler deprecated agitation for the return of the former German colonies in his book, he has since gone over to the colonial school; and now the demand for colonies, as he said in his formal speech in January 1937, 'will ever and again be raised, for our so densely populated country, as a matter of course'. In regard to France it is possible that the Führer's feelings have been slightly moderated since the time when he wrote the book, which was just after the French occupation of the Ruhr. In his speeches he has repeatedly declared that, once the Saar question had been settled, there could be no point of dispute between the two countries. But after the Saar territory had been returned to Germany he occupied the Rhineland without a word of warning to France, and thus created a very sharp 'point of dispute'. And he still allows young Germans to believe that they must some day acquire Strassburg. To propagate this view at home is obviously to create yet another point of dispute.

*Contradictions between Teaching at Home  
and Professions Abroad*

It is indeed one of the main difficulties in dealing with the Germany of Hitler that there is this gross



contradiction between what is inculcated at home and what is professed to foreign countries. The Führer frequently says in his speeches that he wants an understanding with other States. He does not allow one word of internationalism to creep into his teaching at home. He tells us that he has nothing against France. He simultaneously recommends over his own signature the 'annihilation' of France. When later, as we shall see, he criticized the Franco-Soviet alliance in his 'peace-plan' of March 1936, he said that the danger of that military alliance was that a similar situation would arise to that which caused the outbreak of the 'most frightful and most senseless war' of 1914. In *Mein Kampf* he 'calls God to witness' that the war of 1914 was desired by the whole nation, and when it was declared he himself fell on his knee and thanked Heaven with his whole heart for having given him the happiness of living at such a time. In that same March Memorandum he advocated the humanizing of war. In *Mein Kampf* he quotes with approval the opinion of Moltke that 'in war humanitarianism consists in executing it with the utmost possible rapidity' and that therefore 'the severest [*die schärfste*] methods are the most humanitarian'.

In his January speech of this year, as in many previous utterances, he spoke of peace as one of the main and dearest objectives of German policy. He is teaching his own people all the time to despise peace. He is striving to educate them to 'the maximum of aggressiveness'. International problems, he repeatedly

impresses on them, can only be solved by ‘blows of the sword’.

I have often been asked, since I returned from Germany, whether I think that Herr Hitler is sincere. My answer is that he has the sincerity of expediency, but no spiritual consistency. His sincerity is emotional. It is that of an actor who plays his part with such intensity that it becomes impossible to distinguish what is feigned from what is genuine. He can in fact advocate opposite courses with equal sincerity. I believe, for instance, that when Hitler declares that the German people have not enough space within the present frontiers of Germany, he is sincere. When he urges them for national reasons to multiply, and rewards fertile families, he is equally sincere. Whether these rival sincerities are compatible with moral honesty is a question I must leave to the individual opinions of my readers.

It must be remembered that most Germans only see one thing at a time and have a fundamental incapacity to look at a question from any but their own point of view; and even when Hitler says he desires peace in Europe I believe he is sincere; but he means peace on German terms. He does not mean the peaceful acceptance of present conditions. Hitler stands for a revolt against them. His *Pax Germanica* implies a greater Reich; and in the textbooks which are put before the youth of to-day – even a book on the training of athletes, in which the importance of *Weltanschauung* is insisted upon – lists are given of popula-

tions of German race and language who are outside the present boundaries of the Reich. According to these primers there are nearly 4,000,000 Germans in Czechoslovakia, 3,000,000 in Switzerland, over 1,000,000 in Russia, Poland and Alsace-Lorraine respectively, and smaller numbers in Danzig, Schleswig (Denmark), Eupen and Malmédy (Belgium), Memel (Lithuania), South Tirol (Italy), Yugoslavia, Esthonia, Hungary, Luxemburg and Liechtenstein. Austria is regarded as already forming part of the German community. The German people are as a preliminary being steadily trained to believe that it is *right* that they should absorb these foreign subjects of German race. If other countries concerned, whom it is proposed to despoil, do not allow themselves to be despoiled peacefully, they will be in the wrong, and responsible for the consequent rupture of peace. If war comes, the probability is that the mass of the German people will believe they are fighting in a cause that is holy because it is national.

I have diverged from my narrative in order to give an aspect of German character and policy as I understand it, and as it is certainly understood in those countries which have had close dealings with Germany through many generations. Nor would they by any means all agree that these characteristics are accidental or transient. They say that it has always been impossible to put implicit faith in compacts made with German rulers. I confess I do not like the German words for 'Treaty' and 'to promise' – *Vertrag* and

*Versprechen*. The prefix *ver-* has usually, though not quite always, the same converse sense as the English prefix *mis-*; – as fortune, misfortune; lead, mislead, and so on. In German *gehen* means ‘to go’; *vergehen* ‘to go astray’; *raten* ‘to advise’; *verraten* ‘to betray’; *achten* ‘to esteem’, *verachten* ‘to despise’, and so on. *Tragen* means ‘to carry’; and *vertragen* (which is the verb of *Vertrag*), ‘to mislay’ or ‘to secrete’, as well as ‘to put up with’. Stranger still, *sich versprechen*, as well as meaning ‘to bind one’s self’, can mean ‘to make a slip of the tongue’. (*Sprechen* = to speak.) I do not want to make too much of the point. I know that *ver-* sometimes imparts a confirmatory or strengthening sense, as *doppel* = ‘double’, *verdoppeln* = ‘to double’; *allgemein* means ‘general’, *verallgemeinern* ‘to generalize’. *Ver-* therefore can have the effect of either strengthening or contradicting what follows it. Does this curious ambiguity correspond to some deep, and probably unrealized instinct of the German race? Professor Whitehead tells us that the fate of a word has the value of an historical document. I leave the point to philosophers and philologists, and I should very much like to know their opinion. There is in any case interest and importance in the acquired meaning of words, as distinct from their original meaning, and in the different evolution of the same word in different countries. Words which appear to have the same sense may in fact convey a totally different meaning to different peoples. The German word *Ehre*, for instance, is correctly translated ‘Honour’.

But when used, as it so often is, in phrases like 'The honour of the nation', it always definitely conveys to Germans the meaning of 'prestige cum interests'; whereas 'a matter of honour' conveys to English ears rather the opposite sense — that something stands as a national obligation even though its fulfilment may be prejudicial to the material interests of the nation.

These observations ought to be borne in mind when considering the various 'peace proposals' brought forward by Hitler between 1935 and 1937 (which must now be set out), and the sceptical response made to them by Germany's neighbours.

The attitude of many who know Germans intimately is really summed up in the words of a friend of mine, who is closely connected by marriage with them, who gets on well with his German relatives, and who would naturally be biassed in their favour rather than against them. 'Their God is Force and Ruthlessness,' he writes to me. 'Quail and you are lost. Defy them and you are safe.' His words I think succinctly represent the view of his school of thought. And many who are not of his school of thought have at one time or another been constrained to that opinion. Did not President Wilson himself exclaim, in that same speech of September 27th, 1918, to which the Germans appealed when they sued for peace — 'They (the governments of the enemy Powers) have convinced us that they are without honour and do not intend justice. They observe no covenants, accept no principle but force and their own interest . . . We

do not think the same thoughts or speak the same language of agreement.’ But he, the American President, believed there was another aspect of the German character, to which he wanted to make an appeal, but to which, in practice, so little appeal has been made. If we look back in German history we see that the contrary ingredients of the national character have often warred with one another, and that now one, now another has triumphed. The Huns were once masters of Germany for the best part of a century, but were driven out again . . . The old German Orders of Knighthood fought and defeated Prussianism in the thirteenth century . . . Goethe, of the broad, dispassionate *Weltanschauung*, stamped his impress deep upon the German mind . . . To assume that Germanism and Hunnism are always indistinguishable is, in my opinion, to misread the German character – and to despair of settled peace in Europe. But it seems nevertheless to be true that Hitlerism in its present form is a manifestation of the Hun spirit.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix E.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PEACE PROPOSALS

#### *First Proposals for a Settlement*

THE first proposals for a general settlement which Hitler made with any approach to precision were imparted to Sir John Simon and Mr. Eden when they went to Berlin in March 1935.

Hitler then asked that Part V (Disarmament) of the Treaty of Versailles should be formally abrogated, and that the Covenant of the League should be separated from the Treaty of Versailles. If these changes were made, he would be ready to return to Geneva.

He was still in favour of the limitation of arms on terms of absolute equality. He would renounce the making of any weapons which other countries were prepared to abandon. He accepted international supervision.

He claimed also that Germany should be 'regarded as a Mandatory Power'.

He was in favour of the Western Air Pact.

He would not join the proposed Eastern Pact of Mutual Assistance, giving as his reasons that in no circumstances could Germany be found fighting on the same side as Bolshevist Russia, or against Poland, with whom she had a ten-year Treaty of non-aggression. He was, however, ready to sign bilateral Pacts of non-aggression with his neighbours.

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He was not in favour of the 'Collective System'.

From Stresa, to which, as we have seen, the Foreign Secretary proceeded next month, Sir John Simon sent a special message to the German Chancellor to inquire what was the furthest length he could go in the direction of a Collective System. He received the reply that the German Government was ready to agree to a general Security Pact if it was based on mutual and general obligations of non-aggression and arrangements for arbitration, and if, in the case of a breach of the peace, its obligations amounted only to consultation and refusal of help to the aggressor.

This, it may be noted, marks the furthest point Herr Hitler has ever reached in the direction of a Collective System.

The Chancellor's next formal statement of aims and proposals was made in his speech to the Reichstag in May of the same year (1935). He stated them in thirteen points:

1. It was not Germany who had broken the Treaty of Versailles – as implied in a Resolution at Geneva – but the Powers who had promised to disarm and had not done so.

2. The German Government renounced the Disarmament clauses of the Treaty, but 'solemnly declared' that its action applied only to the points mentioned. It 'unconditionally' respected the other articles of the Treaty, including its territorial provisions, and would only carry out 'such revision



as would be inevitable in the course of time' by peaceful means.

3. The German Government would observe and fulfil all obligations arising out of the Treaty of Locarno as long as the other parties were also willing to adhere to it, although the German Government regarded the respecting of the demilitarized Rhine-land Zone as 'an inconceivably difficult contribution for a sovereign State to make to the appeasement of Europe'.

4. The German Government was ready to take part in a Collective System, but the system should allow for the revision of treaties. The suppression of necessary changes was only too liable to result in an explosion in the future.

5. European co-operation could only be brought about step by step.

6. The German Government was ready to conclude pacts of non-aggression with individual neighbours. Its object would be to localize obligations.

7. The German Government was ready to agree to an Air Pact supplementary to the Treaty of Locarno.

8. 'The German Government has made known the extent of the new German army. Under no circumstances will it depart from this.' The offer to limit armaments was renewed.

9. The German Government would in particular agree to the prohibition of the use of gas and inflammable and explosive bombs outside the actual area of warfare. The complete abolition of bomb-

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dropping might eventually be possible. Dum-dum bullets and the killing of wounded had been effectively abolished, and in time bomb-dropping might come to be 'branded as a barbarism contrary to the law of nations'. Then the construction of bombing aeroplanes might soon cease as being superfluous.

10. Germany was ready to limit the size of the heaviest guns and the heaviest tanks.

11. Germany was ready to limit naval tonnage.

12. The German Government was of the opinion that efforts to lessen tension between nations were doomed to failure 'unless suitable measures are taken to prevent a poisoning of public opinion on the part of irresponsible individuals in speech and in writing, on the film and in the theatre'.

13. There should be an international agreement to prevent interference from outside in the affairs of other States.

Much in these proposals was excellent; but it has to be recorded that within the next two years Germany had violated the undertakings given in Points 2, 3, and 8. In spite of 'solemnly declaring' that the repudiation of Versailles covered only the Disarmament clauses, Germany proceeded to reoccupy the Rhineland in March 1936, and simultaneously to tear up the Treaty of Locarno. She later threw off the Versailles restrictions on inland waterways and the Kiel Canal, and 'withdrew her signature' from Article 231, which

placed the responsibility for the war upon Germany and her allies.

Furthermore, she increased the size of her army over the 12 Corps and 36 Divisions which was announced in 1935 to be the strength from which 'under no circumstances' would she deviate. Three additional Divisions had been created by October 1936, and they were Mechanized Divisions - i.e. specially designed to be the spear-head of attack. In all probability more than three have by now been formed.

### *The Rhineland Coup*

It is a difficult matter to tell just where grey turns into black, and it is difficult to say just at what moment Hitler went over to gangsterism in foreign affairs; but if I had to give an estimate, I would say in the days preceding and following the Rhineland coup of March 7th, 1936. He had, it is true, begun his course of openly and unilaterally breaking the Treaty of Versailles (with his repudiation of its military clauses) one year earlier. But, as our narrative has shown, he had at least some justification. He had tried for an agreed modification of the clauses first. His predecessors had also pleaded for it. And a modification had been generally recognized as desirable. Moreover, his avowed aim on assuming office was to recast the Peace Treaty. The denunciation of Part V followed nine years of vain endeavour to remove by agreement the practical discriminations against Germany.

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No such reasons were present to justify the re-occupation of the Rhineland by German troops and the denunciation of the Treaty of Locarno. Hitler had made no attempt whatever to obtain a peaceful revision of the Rhineland status, which, as we have seen, though a carry-over from the Peace Treaty, had been embodied in Locarno at the original suggestion of a German Government. On the contrary, Hitler had himself spontaneously proposed the reaffirmation of the Treaty of Locarno, both privately to the British and French Governments, and publicly in his speech of May 1935.

To his reaffirmation he attached, it is true, the proviso 'as long as the other parties to the Treaty are also willing to adhere to this pact'. And he argued that France had already violated the Pact by concluding a defensive alliance with Russia. His own jurists at the Wilhelmstrasse were alone among official jurists in maintaining this opinion; but there was a fairly widespread feeling outside Germany that the Franco-Soviet alliance – for it amounted in practice to a defensive alliance, which was afterwards joined by Czechoslovakia – tended to upset the balance of Locarno. It in any case definitely made provision for short-circuiting a decision by the Council of the League; for it was agreed by its signatories that if the rule of unanimity should prevent a decision being reached by the Council, the mutual obligation to render assistance against the aggressor should stand nevertheless. This provision might fairly be con-

sidered as being chiefly designed to prevent League procedure from stultifying timely action – for it is unfortunately obvious that a single dissentient on the Council can hold up effective decision and prevent legal action being taken. Dictatorships find themselves entirely free from this kind of restraint. It was therefore perfectly natural that France and Russia should determine that they would not allow rules of League procedure to reduce their treaty to possible futility. Their arrangement is doubly understandable when it is considered in conjunction with the German intention to seize and colonize tracts of Russia and to destroy France which is expressed in *Mein Kampf*.

It cannot therefore be considered that Hitler's excuse was a good one. The Franco-Soviet-Czechoslovak Treaties have always been open to adherence by Germany and other States, and are purely defensive in character. They can harm none but a treaty-breaker.

And they do not directly affect the other signatories of the Treaty of Locarno. There is no commitment in them which would legally involve Great Britain in a European war. On the other hand, they indirectly involve us in the risk of entanglement. Should Germany attack Russia, and France attack Germany in support of her ally, a conceivable consequence might be that France would be overrun. And in that case it would become an urgent matter for Great Britain to decide whether she should not in her own interest take part in the war on the French side.

British public opinion on the whole – though by no

means unanimously – sympathized with Hitler's re-occupation of the Rhine provinces, the keynote being sounded by *The Times* in an article entitled 'A Chance to Rebuild'. The public saw the plain fact that Germany was taking sovereign possession of German territory, and it liked the so-called 'Peace Plan' simultaneously enunciated by Hitler. It seemed at first sight to offer an opportunity for a European settlement to be reached at last by all countries on terms of perfect equality. Most English people regretted the one-sided repudiation of Locarno, but they believed that a new Locarno, as proposed by Hitler, might be swiftly negotiated.

They under-estimated the shock to confidence in Hitler's good faith which his arbitrary method aroused in every Chancery in Europe, and the confirmation of their doubts which it caused to all those people everywhere who are sceptical of the value of a German official signature. It seemed to them that the present rulers of Germany had achieved their internal successes with the aid of ruthlessness, force and fraud, and were now beginning to apply these methods in foreign affairs.

I believe this view to be correct. I was in Berlin at the time, and I can vouch for the fact that there was division of opinion among those in high quarters about the method adopted by Hitler – though none about his aim. Those usually described as 'the moderates' did not believe it necessary to destroy the whole Treaty of Locarno. When Hitler denounced the military clauses

of Versailles he insisted that the rest of the Treaty should stand; and these advisers considered that some such method might have been adopted this time. They would have liked to see negotiation tried first. They did not like unnecessary treaty-breaking; and they did not think that Germany was yet in a position to defy France, Great Britain and the other signatories of the Locarno Treaty in this flagrant manner. That Hitler was himself extremely anxious to avoid practical and forcible reactions abroad was shown by his orders – which only subsequently became known – that, if the reoccupying troops found that French troops had managed to forestall them in entering any of the Rhineland towns, they were not to enter those towns themselves; and that in any case they were not to approach too near to the frontiers of France and Belgium.

But the adventurers in the German Government preferred the methods which always have been, and always will be, more congenial to them. They reckoned – and they reckoned justly – that a bold stroke would cause many words, indeed, and collective reproof, but no violent reaction. They calculated that its audacity would please the German people and give a further fillip to national pride. Not only that, but the very indignation aroused abroad would be useful. It could be turned to excellent account. Germany could be said to be threatened by a ring of angry nations. The Nazi leaders were once more the defenders of the Fatherland against a world of enemies.

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The country would rally round them. A general election would be held in the glow of national feeling to show to the whole universe how solidly the country supported the Nazi regime. And these calculations were justified by events.

One of the Führer's advisers, who supported the bolder policy, had the apt idea of inserting in the German 'peace proposals' an offer to join the League of Nations. To foreign observers inside Germany the proposal appeared nothing less than farcical. Every day they heard tirades against the League and all its ways, in public speeches as in private conversations; and they read in newspapers and textbooks passages covering the League with contempt. They knew that the Nazi outlook was not merely not international, but was vehemently anti-international. Without therefore a complete reversal of this teaching – of which there has yet been no sign – this proposal must cast the strongest doubt upon the sincerity of the whole peace scheme. Yet it was designed to propitiate British public opinion, and help it to overlook the infraction of the Treaty.

In this it was at least temporarily successful. The 'Peace Plan' found general support in the British public.

### *Hitler's New Proposals*

Hitler's proposals, as made in his speech to the Reichstag on March 7th, 1936, and in subsequent memoranda, were as follow:



He hoped to see a bilateral demilitarized zone established with France and Belgium.

He was ready to sign non-aggression pacts with those two countries, and would like Great Britain and Italy to act as guarantors, as in the first Treaty of Locarno.

He would welcome the inclusion of Holland in the Treaty.

He repeated his readiness to conclude a Western Air Pact.

He would sign non-aggression pacts with all Germany's neighbours (not Russia).

Germany was prepared to enter the League of Nations but at the same time she 'expressed her expectation that in the course of a reasonable space of time the problem of colonial equality of rights, as well as of the separation of the League Covenant from its Versailles Treaty base, will be clarified in the course of friendly negotiations'.

The period suggested for the duration of the pacts was twenty-five years.

In addition to the political proposals the Führer suggested that Germany and France should pledge themselves to see that in the education of the young, and in public speeches and the films, everything should be avoided which might poison the relations between the two peoples, whether it were a derogatory or contemptuous attitude or improper interference in internal affairs. He proposed that complaints on this score should be supervised by a joint commission at Geneva.

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Complicated negotiations followed the German coup. They have not yet led to any definite result, except the still closer association of Great Britain and France, who are now bound together by what amounts to a defensive alliance. France is henceforth pledged to the help of Britain, instead of only Britain to the help of France, as was the case under Locarno. In this respect the German stroke of March 7th has had the opposite of the intended effect; for, as I happen by chance to know for certain, it was hoped that the consequence of annoying France by taking possession of the Rhineland and appeasing England by offering to join the League of Nations would be to separate the two western democracies.

In other respects, however, the policy was successful. The Germans soon began to refortify the Rhineland. The nakedness of their western frontier had always been a cause of apprehension to them. Its fortification not only restored their own confidence, but it diminished the influence of France by reducing her power to assist her central and eastern European allies. Instead of a region which invited an immediate counterstroke by France, if a German army had attacked one of her allies, France would henceforth be faced by a fortified line of equal defensive value with the Maginot line, which is supposed to render her own frontiers impassable by land. Germany's power has waxed, that of France has waned. Behind every move of Franco-German policy lies the eternal struggle for superiority between the two races. Their rivalry is a

factor which I believe it is a mistake to suppose can ever be eliminated. It may be now more acute, now dormant; but the two races do not 'click', and never will 'click'.

The crisis was handled with great firmness by Mr. Eden, who had become Foreign Secretary in succession to Sir Samuel Hoare in the previous December. It was not his fault that he had not yet acquired the authority which it is in the highest degree desirable that a British Foreign Secretary should enjoy both at home and abroad, and there was therefore less incisiveness about his policy than he himself, no doubt, would have wished to impart to it. Explicitness was moreover rendered doubly difficult by the excitement raging in public opinion – disposed as it was to take the German view – and by the need to work with the other Locarno Powers and with the Council of the League, which was summoned in accordance with the terms of the Treaty of Locarno. In circumstances of exceptional confusion, however, he formulated a policy, and kept to it steadfastly. He made it absolutely clear at once that the obligations of Locarno were still regarded as in force for Great Britain, even if, against her will, they had now become one-sided. He agreed with the other aggrieved States that the Council of the League must be consulted. He determined that the immediate crisis must be resolved without deliberate resort to force on the Franco-British side; and he persuaded the French Government to agree ultimately to consider the German 'peace' proposals, though the first impulse

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in Paris had been to refuse to consider them until the authority of international law had been re-established.

For the reason given – that the Rhineland coup was Hitler's first wholly unjustified defiance of Treaty obligations – I believe that the French view was right, and that on this occasion we should have joined with the French Government in refusing to look at the German proposals until we had obtained from them an admission that the freely negotiated Treaty of Locarno could not be annulled simply by the denunciation of one Party to it. We could have agreed to modify the Treaty in regard to the Rhineland zone – a modification which, in fact, the Foreign Office had begun to think about before March 7th. I believe we were in a position to say to Germany: 'No, my friends, this sort of thing won't do. The Treaty of Locarno must stand. You must admit that first. We on our part will agree that it must be modified. Then we can discuss the rest of your proposals – but not before.'

In an intuitive estimate of the situation at the time Mr. Harold Nicolson said that in his opinion 'we had got to go through a stage in which Germany is made, at any cost, to apologize for her action'. The words *at any cost* were given in italics; and I believe his instinct was absolutely right – though instead of 'apologize' it would, I think, have been better to ask Germany to make the admission that the Treaty was indestructible by one party. The point was of immense importance for restoring confidence; and I believe that Germany would have accepted it, if we and France had been

stiffer – if France had mobilized and we had refused to treat. Hitler was not so sure of himself then as he has since become. For a week there was great uncertainty and even apprehension in Berlin; and Hitler, in order to avoid unpleasant consequences at that moment, would, if necessary, I believe, have taken the matter out of the hands of the extremist element and put it into the hands of his regular advisers on foreign affairs. As it was, the extremists triumphed, and are now so firmly in the saddle that they are much less likely to be unseated. There was a chance of seeing them put into the background during the week that followed March 7th.

The diplomatic position in Berlin was extraordinary at that time and in the weeks that followed. There were two Foreign Offices, one on each side of the Wilhelmstrasse – on the west side that which housed the regular members of the Foreign Services, on the other that which housed Herr von Ribbentrop and his staff. The present Ambassador in London held, and holds, the position of special adviser to the Führer on foreign affairs. His position was therefore more important than that of any member – even Freiherr von Neurath – of the regular service. Yet the members of the foreign diplomatic corps were bound by convention to see the officials on the west side of the street. They but rarely saw Herr von Ribbentrop. Still less often did they see – apart from an occasional social function – the men standing closest of all to the Führer – Göring, Goebbels and one or two others – who in fact exercised,

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and I understand still exercise, more influence upon Hitler, even in foreign policy, than anybody else at all. I had the advantage of being freely received on both sides of the Wilhelmstrasse, and could tell some strange tales were I free to record individual conversations. I will only say that from the first I found it impossible to believe in the complete sincerity of most of Herr Hitler's peace plan. If he wished for non-aggression Pacts with his neighbours, he could have approached them at any time before or after March 7th. Czechoslovakia is the neighbouring country with whom he has the most difficult issue – the position of the Sudeten Germans – but we have the word of the Czechoslovak Prime Minister that up to January 1937 he had received no formal representations by the German Government. And the propaganda inside Germany was persistently contradicting the spirit of the March offer.

### *Hitler's Speech, January 30th, 1937*

The summary of Hitler's series of 'peace proposals' must be completed by referring briefly to his last important speech, which was delivered on January 30th, 1937 – the fourth anniversary of his accession to power. It contained many references to his desire for peace, and his readiness to collaborate with other Powers – but unlike previous speeches it contained no single definite constructive proposal. For the first time, he omitted any specific reference to the limitation of the size of weapons. He insisted, in fact, that

Germany was alone competent to assess her own military requirements. 'This is decided exclusively in Berlin,' he said, thus apparently going back upon the offers which he had made in every previous speech. He mentioned several neighbouring States which he described as 'realities', because founded on a racial basis – but he ominously omitted Czechoslovakia. He offered to guarantee the neutrality of Belgium and Holland – an offer which the Dutch Government lost no time in declining.

If the reader cares to glance back at the speeches and peace offers which have been enumerated in this chapter he will observe that Hitler's offers have grown steadily less, his demands steadily greater. It is probably true to say that he will always demand as much as he dares to demand. And his disarmament offers have dwindled to almost nothing. On the other hand his colonial demands have grown from his request in March 1935 that Germany should be 'regarded as a Mandatory Power' to a specific demand for colonial territory from the definition of which the world 'Mandate' has dropped out. A claim which is of such special importance to Great Britain must be considered in a separate chapter.

## CHAPTER IX

# THE GERMAN DEMAND FOR COLONIES

I DO not propose to deal at length with the economic side of the German claim for colonies, because in the first place I do not possess any special qualifications for analysing it, and in the second place I am convinced that the economic motive is subordinate to considerations of national prestige. I have had the benefit of hearing the economic claim expounded by Dr. Schacht himself; and I have heard opposite arguments from British politicians and financiers. Having enumerated his technical arguments the German Minister of Economics told me that there must be 'an explosion' unless Germany were given greater facilities for obtaining foodstuffs and raw material. He subsequently made a public statement on the same lines, so his view is now commonly known; but I may add that he left me in no doubt whatever that the explosion would lead to war.

Even his power of exposition did not convince me that the present decline in the standard of living in Germany would be arrested by the simple transfer of colonies. On the other hand it seemed to me, after listening to both sides, to be undeniable that the actual possession of tropical territories must confer definite if not very considerable advantages. In any colonies which might be placed under the control of Germany,



German money would be legal tender, and the local merchants would normally have a preponderant exchange of goods with the master-country, and place their contracts with its manufacturing and engineering firms. As Sir Arnold Wilson has said, trade follows the mandatory flag. I cannot believe the argument to be sound that Germany would gain no economic advantages from possessing colonies.

But there are three separate possibilities to be discussed. One is the transfer back to Germany as a Mandatory Power of the mandated territories which were resigned by her at Versailles and distributed among other States (*see* Appendix A); another is the transfer to Germany of these or other colonial territories in full sovereignty; and a third is a combination of those two proposals. It was noted at the end of the previous chapter that the word 'Mandate' had dropped out of the vocabulary of Hitler's demands. During my stay in Germany in 1936 I never heard the desire to hold mandated territories expressed at all. The demand was that the regions now held in mandate by other nations should be handed over in absolute sovereignty to Germany. There is an element of internationalism in the mandatory system, which is wholly contrary to the possessive, dominating and ultra-national doctrine of the Nazis.

### *German Colonial Propaganda*

Just as Bismarck and the ex-Kaiser were in turn won over to the 'Colonial' school by a small band of active

enthusiasts, so the present movement has sprung from the unremitting exertions of a few propagandists – Dr. Schnee, Dr. Schacht, General von Epp and General Göring; and now it has been formally taken over by the Nazi Party. The Nazi propaganda machinery is therefore working full time upon it; and within a few years the whole country is expected to be ‘colonial-minded’. The propagandists are teaching the people of the Reich that its colonies were wrongly stolen from it after the War; that the causes of the War are now known not to have been those upon which the edifice of Versailles was built up; Germany was not responsible for the outbreak in 1914, therefore the moral and legal basis upon which the colonies were handed to others has been destroyed.

Much is made of the passage in M. Clemenceau’s letter to the German delegation in 1919 (to which reference has been made on p. 29). Whatever the Allies may have felt in the heat of the conflict, the view is now completely exploded – so the German argument runs – that Germany showed herself unworthy to train or educate the natives of Africa. German administration was excellent; the services which were rendered by German scientists in the combat against tropical diseases bear comparison with the work of any Colonial Power in the world. And President Wilson’s Fifth of his Fourteen Points is naturally exploited. It was therein stated that there was to be ‘an impartial adjustment of all colonial claims’. Yet Germany’s claims were not even considered. Her large

empire was snatched from her, and handed over chiefly to Great Britain, which already held the largest Empire in the world. The result has been that Great Britain, with a total imperial white population of 67,000,000, owns a quarter of the globe and its inhabitants; whereas the people of the Reich, who also number 67,000,000, are hemmed in on a rather infertile soil in northern Europe, and do not own a square yard of oversea territory. Germany is, in fact, the only great Power which has no empire; while several of the smaller European States, like Belgium, Holland and Portugal, rule over extensive imperial possessions.

Germany, moreover, has never been a self-supporting country, and she has special need for the supplies of foodstuffs and textile raw materials which could be found in the territories previously owned by her. It is admitted that before the War their resources were relatively undeveloped; but it is argued that in the conditions of freer trade which then prevailed intensive exploitation was unnecessary. It is maintained that modern methods could supply the bulk of the needs of the German people from the colonies which formerly were theirs (and which are still habitually spoken of as *unsere Kolonien*). Every schoolchild is made to study maps and statistics which indicate that his family's bananas and lemons, coffee and tobacco, flax, hemp, jute and rubber could be produced in territory that used to be German and is destined to be German again.

It was my duty to follow this propaganda as closely

as possible, and I believe that the above is a fair reproduction of the arguments which are being daily and nightly impressed upon the German mind – though the reproduction is in a very abbreviated form and expressed in more moderate language than is sometimes used. On many a Nazi platform are to be heard oratorical sarcasms about the ‘broken pledges’ of Great Britain. For we are accused of having violated the Congo Act of 1885, because we and its other signatories therein agreed not to use the Congo basin as a base for warlike operations. We and the French are charged with having ‘dragged the coloured peoples into the War’. The colonies were, it is always said, peacefully acquired by Germany and peacefully used, but were seized from her by force of arms. This theme is developed according to the taste of the orator and the nature of his audience.

Nothing is said, of course, of the use made by the Germans of their African territory for submarine bases. One hears nothing of the revolt within the Union of South Africa having been fomented from German South-West. As for our having carried the War into Africa, the Germans, apart from inciting this revolt, naturally used their powerful wireless station in Togoland from the very first day of hostilities; and it was not till mid-September that the mast was seized by British native troops, with the British Navy standing guard off the coast. Its seizure and control had become a matter of naval importance to the Allied cause. Germany also launched an attack on the

Belgian Congo, one of her objects in the War being to despoil Belgium of her colonies. But of course the essence of propaganda is that it should be one-sided.

### *The British Case*

The German public never hears, and probably never will hear, the British case against cession. And it is always more difficult to advertise a negative case. For the British view is, in brief, 'No'. Germany, in our opinion, was mainly, if not solely, responsible for turning a Balkan quarrel into a world-war; and as a consequence of it she lost her colonies, which otherwise nobody would have dreamt of taking from her. She ceded them absolutely at the end of the War. Large and legitimate interests are accumulating in the hands of the present occupiers – whether British or Belgian or French – and the mere suggestion of a transfer hampers business and impedes prosperity. It would be intolerable to the white settlers to be handed over to Germany; and it might be considered equally intolerable by the natives. The Germans were guilty of many brutalities against the Herreros in South-west Africa, and they have blots upon their administration elsewhere. And of course tropical possessions offer no solution whatever for their problem of over-population.

In some cases the original frontiers of the ceded territories have been altered, so as to make them conform to administrative convenience – for instance strips of Togoland and Cameroon have been added to the

Gold Coast and Nigeria. We moreover believe in our own colonial methods, and like to think we can give the natives better justice and greater personal freedom than any other foreign administrators – at least than the present German regime would be likely to give them. If ordinary civil rights are denied to Liberals, Socialists, Communists and Jews, how are the rights of natives likely to fare?

On the economic side Germany has free access to all mandated territories. She still retains in her hands, I believe, the greater part of the banana business in the Cameroons, and Lord Plymouth in the House of Lords recently gave some striking figures of the growing trade between her and British colonial territories, both those held under mandate and in absolute sovereignty. Every country can get as much raw material as it can pay for from any mandated colony.

Germany has no capital for export, and even if territory were made over to her how can she pretend that she could develop it from her own resources? Nazi Germany would be far more likely (so it is argued) to exploit her African territory militarily, to train the natives as soldiers, and to make Africa once more a base for commerce-destroying activity in the event of war. In other words, we should, by handing over to her parts of the African coast, be throwing away military and naval assets. We know that on these and on other grounds the Dominions are strongly against cession. In their trade policies the Dominions are absolutely autonomous. The return of any mandated

territory to Germany is indeed essentially a question for the whole Empire; and the retrocession of certain parts of it might cause a grave division of Imperial opinion.

These and many other arguments are advanced against cession. I do not say that all are unimpeachable. For instance, the brutalities of former German administrators can be easily exaggerated. I have heard impartial tributes to the excellence of German administration; and the manner in which the natives fought for Lettow-Vorbeck in German East Africa hardly warrants the assumption that Africans, if given a free choice, would always automatically opt for British rule. And which of us has no stain on our record of Imperial administration?

I conclude from this brief survey, in which I have tried to set out dispassionately the popular arguments on both sides, that Germany has established no clear case for a return of the mandated territories on economic grounds, and no case whatever for their return on legal grounds. She made an appeal to the sword in 1914, and lost them by the sword.

Nevertheless, some adjustment of colonial territories might in certain circumstances be warranted on political grounds, and as part of a major settlement. That point will be discussed in the course of the concluding chapter, which contains a suggested basis for a comprehensive and practical agreement on international lines in Europe and Africa.

## CHAPTER X

### RETROSPECT AND PROSPECT

'ONE way to help in ascertaining where we are,' said Lord Grey of Fallodon, 'is to look back on the road by which we have travelled.' I have tried to apply that test to British policy towards Germany since the War; and I think we can all agree without exception that the place we have reached is strangely different from that which we set out to find. It shows indeed many of the characteristic features we knew before 1914 - and from which we most desired to get away. The general aspect of the scenery is if anything wilder and more forbidding. It somehow recalls the terrible wilderness in which we fought in the years following 1914. And how little it resembles that better land which we seemed to have reached in 1919 and on which we hopefully built the League of Nations! The building that was to house the parliament of the world has a half-deserted appearance; and the ideals which we planted to surround it are still no more than feeble saplings.

Over the whole barbaric landscape we can almost feel an atmosphere of expected calamity. Instead of the Land of Promise we have arrived in the Land of Fear. Political stormclouds lower overhead. Through them one hears the drone of scores of thousands of aeroplanes; and the inhabitants seem to live in terror of the aerial traffic passing above them. For everywhere



men are now building refuges, which they call funk-holes. Their talk is of war; and they say that the next attack will be directed against the endurance of the nerve-power of the common people, and that that country will win which first reduces the other to imbecility.

This is certainly not the place to which we meant to travel. We must have taken – and other countries, perhaps, even more often than ourselves – several wrong turnings. I have only mapped one strip of the country, covering the route of British treatment of Germany; but it has been enough to indicate some of them; and to show how occasionally we missed the right turnings – narrow and difficult lanes, perhaps, up which we looked longingly; but then we felt a pluck at our sleeve by a companion, and allowed ourselves again to be drawn along the wrong road.

We cannot therefore entirely divest ourselves of responsibility for the resurgence of power politics in the Europe of to-day. The British share of responsibility is no doubt less than that of France. It is certainly not as great as that of Hitler. I only say that we have made our contribution of mistakes, the sum of which renders the present confusion and tension worse than any since the War. Only bold remedial measures now have a chance of success.

The backward glance may help us to find a way out from this false position. If we really want to establish a new order we must be able to prove to Hitler that the international system which we mean to set up is

not planned for a humbled and weak Germany, but that it will allow scope for the active participation of a nation that is proud, efficient and overflowing with vitality.

That is the first and greatest lesson to be drawn from our first and greatest mistake – that of having never held a peace Congress at which Germany sat as an equal. Lord Grey, according to his biographer, considered the manner in which the Peace Treaty was dictated ‘an outrage without precedent’. Its terms have by now been in great part annulled. The fragment that remains should be incorporated in a supplementary settlement founded on an internationalism that is not biassed in favour of the victorious countries. Can we not conclude a Peace Treaty as we now would wish, in retrospect, to have made it in 1919? After the forcible modification of the Treaty of Versailles by Hitler the only material issue outstanding between England and Germany is that of colonies. And the question has been formally raised by the Chancellor and by his ambassador, Herr von Ribbentrop.

The new settlement should make Germany a partner in Africa, if she on her side is ready to become a partner in an international system in Europe. Thus in composing our one material difference with Germany we should also be rendering an immense service to European security. Hitler and ourselves must get back to our better natures. We intended Germany to be a partner after the War. But our first mistake was followed by others. We did not work for the steady

revision of the unnegotiated treaties, even when, in the cooler vision of the period of recovery, we saw that they had all without exception been harsh, and in many points definitely one-sided and unfair – as in the case of Hungary, which had to suffer purely Magyar-speaking districts to be handed over to Czechoslovakia, Rumania and Yugoslavia.

We did not even pursue with rigid firmness the policy of non-revision, by which those three Little Entente States have at least kept Hungary immobile. We have not kept Germany down. A policy of repression is never constructive, and almost always leads to an explosion; but, as the late Lord Salisbury once said, it is better to have almost any policy than to have no policy at all. And British Governments have hovered between two policies. We have ‘just swithered’, as the Scots say. Our spokesmen often talked about peaceful revision. But – apart from anticipation of treaty-dates in the occupied Rhineland Zones and the cessation of reparation payments – we obtained no tangible results. British statesmen have never made a resolute attempt to set Article XIX (revision of treaties) of the Covenant in motion. Did any British Government representative ever say plainly and publicly that Germany must be allowed to have anti-aircraft guns and build fortresses on her own soil, until Germany took these rights for herself? While allowing it to be understood that Germany must eventually have the defensive weapons, we joined France in refusing Hitler’s perfectly reasonable plan

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for providing them. We failed to distinguish betimes between the justified and unjustified demands first of Brüning, then of Hitler. The recovery of internal rights of sovereignty, which should have been willingly and quickly conceded, has therefore been achieved by a series of Hitlerian hammerstrokes, which have convinced even non-Nazi Germans that force is still the best argument. We have encouraged Germans to believe that our 'no' may be converted into a grudging 'yes' if they only press hard enough; and each repeated acquiescence weakened our authority.

Let us be sure now that if we say 'no' we mean it; but, above all, do not let our whole policy in regard to colonies consist in saying 'no'. So far British statesmanship has in the period since Locarno shown its greatness only in home affairs. In international affairs our leaders have been full of good intentions but have not gone firmly for results. A small result is so much more valuable than a big programme. We have heard too much about 'Peace Plans'. The whole course of post-War diplomacy has proved up to the hilt the wisdom of a Labour leader's famous phrase 'The inevitability of gradualness'. What more trenchant testimony than his could be afforded that even Socialist aims can best be attained by Conservative methods, and that a short step towards an ideal is much more valuable than a long affirmation of that ideal?

It has become quite idle at this moment to entertain plans for general disarmament, for collective security or for revision through the League of Nations.

A bold but simple approach by Great Britain to Germany is much more likely to produce a result.

Collective diplomacy has proved a clumsy and ineffective instrument. The successful agreements hitherto concluded with Germany have been the bilateral Polish Ten-Year Pact and the British Naval Treaty. And in the naval negotiations Great Britain has been acting as intermediary for other nations. The same method might now be adopted on a larger scale.

It is wiser for many reasons to keep the League of Nations in the background for the present. Its executive body, the Council, is better constituted to perform arbitral than diplomatic functions; and the whole institution is at present an object of morbid aversion to Germany. This frame of mind can be fairly easily understood by anybody who takes the trouble to study the story of the seizure of Memel by Lithuania, the history of the Upper Silesian question, of the Anschluss, and Disarmament. The League is known to be regarded by many of the ex-allied countries as an instrument for executing and enforcing the hated Treaty of Versailles; and it has failed in its nobler purposes of revision and war-prevention. The mingled scorn and aversion felt for it must handicap any negotiations conducted with the Reich at Geneva.

There is the additional argument that such revision as has been successfully achieved has been negotiated outside the League. The Treaty of Sèvres was first forcibly revised by Turkey; and then its successor, the

Treaty of Lausanne, was peaceably revised at Montreux – and here it may be interpolated that Turkey, having thrown off its dictated Treaty of Peace, has ever since lived on excellent terms with its former hereditary enemy, Greece.

For these and for other reasons a direct British approach to Germany seems to offer the only prospect of success. There must of course be no disloyalty to the principles of the League, and no disloyalty to France or any other country. If the United States of America could negotiate a separate peace with Germany and retain the confidence of other governments, it should also be possible for Great Britain to do it without forfeiting the trust of her democratic associates. And the devotion of Mr. Eden to the League should – if he were to adopt this method – be an absolute guarantee that in seeking separately a durable settlement with Germany Great Britain was helping forward the good of all. The needs of British, French and Belgian security in any case bind them closely together. Nothing will alter their respective promises of armed assistance, of which their common interests are the surest pledge.

Moreover, Germany herself has often stated her preference for the bilateral procedure. Let it be admitted that this preference, if understandable, arises from mixed motives. She believes it to be the most practical method; but she also knows that, in the company of other nations, she usually finds herself the sole champion of her own point of view. She is, more than any

other country in Europe, regarded as the common enemy. The explosive element in her 'policy of surprises' compels her neighbours to make common plans for defence against aggression. The consequence is that the Collective System, as it is called, has a hostile sound in German ears. What exactly the phrase connotes to other nations in the present state of world affairs is not easily definable, but to Germany it means much the same thing as encirclement. By a bilateral approach we should more easily make a good beginning.

The peculiar difficulties of negotiation with Germany can also probably best be dealt with by a Government which retains freedom of manoeuvre and can act promptly on its own responsibility. We must take nations, like individuals, as we find them. We must keep in mind the teachings of *Mein Kampf*. Nor can it be ignored that *divide et impera* has always been a maxim of diplomacy, and that Germany no less than other countries has often tried to play one party off against another. That is an additional reason for straight *tête-à-tête* negotiation.

And since the days of Frederick the Great, with exceptional periods, German diplomacy has been conducted in undiplomatic ways. The military mentality of the German rulers gives the clue to their methods. Secrecy of intention, swiftness of action, is their favoured procedure. It was so when Frederick seized Silesia; it was so when Hitler reoccupied the Rhineland. Hitler's private study in the Nazi Braunhaus at Munich holds on its walls more than one portrait of

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'der Grosse Fritz', whose career is familiar to every German, and who is still, as Lord Rosebery called him, the Patron Saint of Germany.

Mystification of the other side is part of the German preliminary business; and in the background is force. Mystification is often effected by keeping diplomatic agents in ignorance of what is in the mind of headquarters. Just as Napoleon sometimes concealed his plan of campaign from his own marshals, so Hitler has kept the officials of the Wilhelmstrasse ignorant of his next move; and since they are the sources of information for foreign diplomats they act the part of foils perfectly. Before the War the same sort of relationship existed between the Kaiser's Camarilla in Berlin and Prince Lichnowsky in London. The ambassador was himself anxious to establish real friendship with Great Britain, and did not know what was being plotted in Berlin in the summer of 1914. By being sincerely himself, therefore, he was completely misleading. 'We were not dealing with principals,' Lord Grey said to me once, speaking of the weeks that preceded the outbreak of hostilities. But it is one of the most authentic evidences of Hitler's desire for an understanding with Great Britain that he has sent his right-hand man, Herr von Ribbentrop, to be Ambassador at the Court of St. James's. Herr von Ribbentrop may be comparatively new to the ways of diplomacy; but no mere diplomatist would be so true a representative of his Government.

And let us remember that dictators like to make their



announcements in headlines and are impatient for results, while professional diplomacy prefers invisible ink and knows not the word 'impatience'. In trying to reach agreement with the Reich, allowance has to be made for the peculiar methods of German diplomacy; and continual attention has also to be paid to the ideas which are being quietly but insistently inculcated at home. For this purpose it is useful to keep an eye on journals which have no foreign circulation and are not much read by foreigners in Berlin. I will give an instance from the last number of the Nazi educational review to which I have had access – the *Nationalsozialistische Erziehung* for November 21st, 1936. Its readers are taught that frontiers are made by men – an idea culled directly from *Mein Kampf* – and are therefore 'dynamic'. They are also told that the German race is entitled to extend eastwards, because it held the land before the Slavs came there and because its *Kultur* is higher than that of the Slavs. The Slavs, in fact, have no business in Europe at all; for 'Europe ends there, where the *Gestaltungskraft* (formative power) of the Nordic soul ends'. And so, with the colonial campaign proceeding all the time, young Germans are being deliberately taught to covet territory beyond their frontiers – beyond the frontiers of their race, on the Continent and overseas.

This Nazi practice of indoctrination suggests two questions – one, does it constitute a violation of the spirit of the Covenant of the League and of the Kellogg

Pact? And if so, should not foreign governments take the matter up officially? The answer to the first question seems to me to be that the practice certainly constitutes a violation of the spirit of the Covenant and Pact in so far as it advocates, not change, but change by force. The answer to the second seems to me to be a plain affirmative. Doctrines that are taught in regard to home affairs are not the concern of foreign governments; but if doctrines are taught which directly impinge upon the rights of foreign governments, they cannot properly be regarded as a solely domestic affair. Hitler himself recognizes this, for he always insists upon the importance of international cultural agreements, covering the activities of cinemas, newspapers and school-teaching.

Apart from the practical issue of the colonies there is therefore the larger and more comprehensive issue of the expansionist ambitions of Germany, and the advocacy (at home) of the use of force for their attainment. This issue may be quite succinctly put in the form of a question – Kellogg or Clausewitz? Is war to be regarded as a proper instrument of policy, or is it not?

Great Britain, of course, stands absolutely by her signature of the Kellogg Pact; and a change of tone in Nazi teaching at home must necessarily form an integral part of an agreement with Germany – Germans must alter their views about the Kellogg Pact. But so must we.

Let us look at the Pact from the point of view of

the States who believe that they have got less territory than they are entitled to, and feel that they are suffering from an injustice. They will say that the Pact is certainly an excellent arrangement for the countries which want no changes. Those countries have only got to say 'No', and what can the others do? There is no machinery whatever for coercing any country to give up something it does not want to give up. Even Article XIX of the Covenant implies the consent of the surrendering party. And Article XIX, by suggesting the revision of treaties 'when the peace of the world is endangered', positively encourages States to rattle the sabre.

So we are driven to the disagreeable but unavoidable conclusion that to refuse to consider any demands for which a *prima facie* case can be established is to make resort to war the only possible method of effecting political changes. And the country which can only say 'no' on a fair issue must share the responsibility if war afterwards breaks out upon that issue.

In the previous chapter I came to the conclusion that on legal grounds Germany could establish no claim to the recovery of her former colonies. She appealed to the sword in 1914, and she lost them by the sword. But when we made peace we proclaimed new principles. We meant the old pre-Covenant standards to be discredited. According to the Fifth of President Wilson's Fourteen Points, to which we all paid homage, there was to be a 'free, open-minded

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and absolutely impartial' adjustment of all colonial claims. Could the word 'impartial' mean anything except that Germany's claims were to be considered? Yet Germany was not even listened to on the subject. And we, Great Britain, made the mistake of taking too much. Lord Grey and some other far-sighted persons said it was a mistake at the time. And the mistakes are now being paid for. However much modern moralists may argue that, because faults are explainable, they should not be punished, I fancy that the maxim is untrue in theory and in fact, and that Goethe was right when he said *Es rächt sich aller Schuld auf Erde*.<sup>1</sup> And in one form or another we have got to pay for a whole series of mistakes, culminating in the failure to effect change without war. The historian, Professor C. K. Webster, once said to me: 'The League of Nations will be a real thing when it has altered a single frontier in Europe.' It has not altered one yet.

But the frontiers of Europe are not the immediate concern of Great Britain; and we should not assume any special responsibility for them. In so far as we are consulted, our care should be to recommend wise and timely modification.

On the other hand colonial questions are our special concern. And if we really believe in the new dispensation which we have so warmly proclaimed, we are surely in the best position to show the way by making to Germany, not the most niggardly, but the most substantial offer that it is in our power to make

<sup>1</sup> Every fault brings its earthly retribution.

without sacrificing essential British interests or endangering the Empire. This would surely be a practical expression of that spiritual leadership which Mr. Baldwin has recently called upon the British Commonwealth to give to the world.

There are to my mind convincing reasons why we should not simply hand back to Germany all her lost colonies. In the first place it would be bad policy and a bad precedent to concede exactly what Germany demands. It is best in every way that we ourselves should take the lead, and make our offer on general grounds of justice and of the new ideal of statecraft.

Strategic considerations count most in German policy, and they can therefore never be omitted from ours; and for that reason I suggest that we should not be ready to hand back Tanganyika, which Germany would specially like to regain. In addition to the large British interests which have been accumulated there in the course of the last twenty years, the Territory forms a very important stopping place on our Cairo to Capetown air route, the value of which will increase with time. Germany would almost certainly turn what they still like to call German East Africa into a naval and air base, so that strategically we should be directly weakening ourselves and unduly strengthening Germany. The adjoining colonies of Northern Rhodesia, Uganda and Kenya would raise the strongest objections, and might have fears for their safety. The Union of South Africa has already stated its objections in no uncertain manner. For strategic and Imperial

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reasons therefore – apart from the general reasons, which are present in all cases – it seems to me that discussions of that particular transfer can serve no useful purpose.

And South Africa would not merely object, but would refuse, to part with responsibility for S. W. Africa. Australia and New Zealand would similarly refuse to consider the retrocession of the Mandates in the Pacific committed to their care. No proposal would be worth while which caused the risk of a serious split in the British Commonwealth.

But can we not make Germany a fairly substantial offer in West Africa? And need it be confined to territory already under a mandate? If we can bring Germany into a new international system by admitting her as a partner in Africa, it would, I submit, be worth while to make the sacrifice of placing some of our own African territory under a mandate from the League of Nations, and recommending that Germany should either at once or by a gradual process be substituted for Great Britain as the Mandatory Power.

I see all the objections to renouncing a yard of British territory, and a single British subject, white or black, in any circumstances; but I believe the present issue for all mankind to be so tremendous, that a strong lead must be given somewhere unless we are prepared to face future conflicts in terms of diplomacy by bombing.

By transferring Gambia and Sierra Leone, for instance, under a mandate, we should be extending

the mandatory system, for which alone there is much to be said. If to their voluntary surrender we added the transfer of the strips we still administer of the former German colonies of Togoland and the Cameroons, we should be giving Germany the opportunity of usefully contributing, on a considerable scale, to the work of administration and civilization in Africa.

Those who cannot bear the idea of relinquishing anything that has once been British may be reminded that often in the last two centuries we have voluntarily surrendered territory. We did it in earlier days with the unconcerned magnanimity of confident strength. After the Napoleonic Wars we behaved with far-sighted generosity to our beaten but still formidable enemy, both in Europe and overseas. Talleyrand was one of the chief figures of the negotiated Peace of Vienna; France retained her pre-war boundaries; and we restored most of the possessions captured by the British navy. To one country or another, and at different times, we have given up Tangier and Corsica, islands in the East Indies and the West, in the Indian Ocean and the Aegean Sea, Java, Cuba, Martinique, Corfu. And we remain a great Empire. But it is no sign of greatness to cling to every morsel we possess.

Nor do I see why any offer we choose to make should be dependent on the assent of any other country. In recent answers in the House of Commons on the subject of the possible transfer of mandated territory, Mr. Baldwin and Mr. Eden have both made the point

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that it is a matter which affects all the Mandatory Powers and other foreign Governments. No doubt any transfer of mandates would have to be approved by the Council of the League. But if we make up our minds that it is necessary to effect a transfer, let it be hoped that the attitude of other countries will not be made an excuse for doing nothing. In dealing with dictatorships we shall be at a disadvantage if we confine ourselves strictly to conventional diplomatic methods. It is essential that any large-scale proposal we make should be made openly and publicly.

If France chooses to join in negotiations with Germany, any settlement that emerged would no doubt be so much the more satisfactory. But we simply cannot afford to become slaves of the habit of waiting upon others before we can act. It may of course not be possible to confine the negotiations entirely to Great Britain and Germany. Italy, for instance, may try to come in on the German side. That possibility has to be considered and provided against.<sup>1</sup> But it need not prevent a direct approach and a firm offer to Germany.

It is possible that Germany will not accept proposals on the lines here indicated. That obviously is for Germany to decide. It is the part of British statesmanship to make a positive proposal, of which one good result at least would be to help to unite public opinion

<sup>1</sup> We fulfilled our colonial promises to Italy (some years) after the War by the cession of part of Jubaland. And she has since seized Ethiopia. In Europe any modification of frontiers on the basis of race would diminish her territory.



behind the Government in the event of a conflict. I am convinced that it will not unite behind a mere negative.

By making an offer we shall not be offering a sop to Nazi-ism. Quite the contrary; the suggestion is that there should be a new international agreement of which a colonial readjustment would be one part. We on our side would be acting more closely in accord with our earlier and better impulses; and Hitler on his part would have to revert to the excellent proposals he has more than once propounded. The most important German contribution must be a change of mind at home – from extreme nationalism to moderate internationalism. In May 1935 and again in March 1936 Hitler advocated the control of propaganda as it affected foreign nations. In 1935 he said that efforts to lessen tension between nations were doomed to failure unless suitable measures were taken to prevent a poisoning of public opinion in speech and in writing and on the film; and in 1936 he proposed in particular that France and Germany should pledge themselves to see that in the education of the young, and in public speeches and films, everything should be avoided which might poison the relations between the two peoples; and he made the practical suggestion that a joint commission should be set up at Geneva to consider complaints made on this score by either party. In addition Hitler has actually made his Cultural Agreement with Poland, which has been loyally carried out. The revisionist agitation in Germany in

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regard to the Polish Corridor, though vehement before 1933, was completely stopped by the Führer; and there has been cordial collaboration between the two countries in wireless programmes and other cultural activities.

All this is in logical accordance with the immense importance which Hitler attaches to propaganda. To him – as to Stalin and Mussolini – it is an unequalled instrument for moulding the mind of the nation, and for mobilizing opinion behind the policy of the future. By contrast with our own Governments, which strangely neglect this perfectly legitimate method of stating their case, Hitler uses the microphone to lead his people forward to the policy he intends to carry out, and places himself at a great advantage over our own leaders. Broadcasting is a natural medium of democratic leadership. It is of course abused in Germany and the other autocracies, where the wireless is under absolute official control. Freedom of opinion will never be surrendered by the British public. But the Government, surely, might also have freedom to state its views at regular intervals directly to the whole people – especially when Parliament is not sitting. At present extremists of every sort have their turn at the microphone. Everybody is heard except the Government. It would be no encroachment upon liberty if, say, half an hour in the 100-hour week were reserved for a statement by a Government spokesman.

In any case the microphone is a source of immense strength to the German Government, and an inter-

national factor the tremendous importance of which is only now beginning to be grasped in democratic countries. Its possibilities for harm are almost incalculable; so are its possibilities for good. Hitler could use it, if he wished, for advocating the moderate internationalism of which he has often spoken favourably in his speeches. He could also, if he chose, reverse the tendency of teaching in other spheres, as he has in the case of comment on Poland; and he himself has made the proposal of supervision by an impartial body, which would of course have the duty of keeping itself posted on cultural tendencies inside all the countries which were partners to the agreement.

At present the Nazi leaders are trying to make Germany into a nation of pagan warriors. That is the tragedy. But all Germans do not want to be pagan warriors. That is the hope.

They wanted Hitler to make Germany strong and respected – or feared. That aim has been achieved. They do not necessarily want to follow their extremists into extravagant, bellicose adventures.

The moment may thus be propitious for leading propaganda away from the *Mein Kampf* model. If the present indoctrination continues unabated Germany may revert to pre-Christian ideals. I believe the Germans to have by nature a strongly religious outlook, but they are easily led to worship idols. And Ludendorff and Rosenberg are formidable false prophets – the one ruggedly pagan, the other smoothly de-christianizing.

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Yet the better side of Nazi-ism still stands for manliness and a spirit of service, abstemiousness and a power of endurance, single mindedness and an abstention from the more enervating forms of pleasure. Christian or semi-paganized, the Germans are a very great race; and they do feel confined for space on the sands and swamps of the northern part of their homelands, much as the Highlanders felt cramped in northern Scotland and were impelled to foray southward and seek more fertile soil beyond their boundaries. The phrase 'a place in the sun' corresponds truly to the perpetual urge by which this constricted man-power is impelled to break away from the nebulosity and barrenness of the north into warmer climates. I believe it would be an act of true wisdom to give all the scope to its energies that is possible. The economic organization of central Europe, for instance, will probably never be accomplished except under German direction. And I do not think we have the right to say that this people is not fit to colonize.

Hitler has not yet threatened war on account of colonies. We are still free to make a spontaneous offer. But with him there is always force in the background. If we merely say 'no', there is the prospect that in time Germany will be worked up to make war against us, which will no doubt take the form of an unannounced attack upon the civil population of the heart of the Empire. We should presumably retaliate by bombing Berlin. So the world would see the insane performance of two civilized nations laying each other waste

for the sake of proving their fitness to civilize Africa.

But unless our democracy has lost its capacity for robust policy, or Hitler's better nature has entirely atrophied, a settlement is possible. Its essential part, covering colonies and propaganda, could be accompanied or preceded by a number of useful minor points, which would do much to lessen friction and make easier the main course of the negotiations. We could withdraw, for our part, the 1919 statement which implies German unfitness to govern native races; we could plainly assert our readiness to separate the Treaties – well called the 'War Treaties' by Mr. Garvin – from the Covenant; and in the economic sphere we could modify the application of our Most-Favoured-Nation clause, at least in regard to Europe. And is there any reason why these things should not be done promptly and ungrudgingly? Later we must take up disarmament again. That question necessarily involves several – but not all – nations; and its solution will follow and not precede a political settlement.

In the meantime we are wise to make ourselves strong. Let us rearm by all means – especially as the British Government has freely recognized that rearmament alone is not enough. The formidable estimates published in March 1937 are only one part of the bill we have to face on account of earlier mistakes. But the bold announcement of the figure of £1,500,000,000 was in itself a timely and necessary stroke of policy and a good beginning for new negotiations with Germany. In previous years our authority

had been weakened abroad by the obvious longing of the British people to relax, and by the great popularity of pacifist literature. Germans were beginning to believe that we were a nation of effeminate and cranks of the sort that Hitler likes to see loose in other countries but locked up in his own. But even our leading statesmen have spoken as if 'peace' were the only guide to British policy. Peace can never be a good guide to policy. It is a consequent, not a means. Like happiness for individuals, it is a blessing which nations may hope for when they have done their jobs to the best of their ability. But to make it the guide to policy in the circumstances of to-day is to avoid any difficulties which may disturb it; and that is the surest way to let them become intractable. It is only too apparent that during the last decade we have shirked awkward issues in foreign affairs and contented ourselves with assuaging, mitigating, deprecating and evading problems, instead of settling them. A mere policy of peace is apt to become a policy of palliatives.

A virile nation cares more for justice than for peace. With justice, then, even more than peace in our minds, let us all, Government, Press and the public, face the paramount problem of reconciling England and Germany with frankness, fearlessness and an unshaken determination to reach a durable settlement. Free opinion is the privilege of a democracy, divided opinion its handicap. Realizing our individual responsibilities, which render contrary views the more effectively destructive of each other but which make

a united view both more invigorating and more resistant than the dragooned unity of a totalitarian state, let all of us give what support we may to our Foreign Secretary. For the times are critical. I think it is no exaggeration to say that we are threatened with a possible break-up of European civilization. If Great Britain and Germany could settle their differences — there is no need for an alliance or anything like it — the present disintegrating process would almost certainly be arrested. The union of British and German (and other) efforts would exercise a vital influence upon events and might just turn the scale in favour of restoring prosperity (of which the elements are ready to hand) and a League System, instead of permitting the spread of bankruptcy and ungodliness, and a *sauve qui peut* among the nations.

It is said by some that every day gained is a gain for peace. I believe that to be a superficial and unreflecting view. The present tendency is for Britain and Germany to drift apart. A conscious effort is needed, and a supreme effort. There may not be another chance. The forces of armed conflict are growing too rapidly. War is being stamped again with the hallmark of legitimacy, which had been erased from it in Paris in 1928. Men's will to fight is being deliberately stimulated.

And we have the example of Spain before our eyes to show the more indiscriminate material ruin and the more degrading havoc of human nature which the latest kind of warfare inflicts. The Spaniards are num-

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bered among the civilized peoples. But let war break out and it is a virtue to mangle, it is bravery to kill! Any war between Europeans and Europeans would be just as much a Civil War as the war in Spain, and would be just as savage – more savage perhaps, and more devastating. If the difference of ideals and interests between Britain and Germany grows instead of being reconciled, if it is transformed into an armed conflict, it will probably spread between the nations, and will obliterate all that is best in our civilization for an incalculable period of years.

But we must be ready to face war, if Hitler will not accept a just and honourable settlement. If the Nazi system is to be made a scourge to humanity, we must oppose it to the end, as we opposed Napoleon until his power to do harm was destroyed.





## EPILOGUE

(From Part III, Act v, Scene 5 of  
Thomas Hardy's *The Dynasts*)

*The scene is the House of Commons, after the news has reached it that Napoleon has escaped from Elba – LORD CASTLEREAGH (Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs) speaking:*

Sir, seeing how the events of these last days  
Menace the toil of twenty anxious years,  
And peril all that period's patient aim,  
No auguring mind can doubt that deeds which root  
In steadiest purpose only, will effect  
Deliverance from a world-calamity  
As dark as any in the vaults of Time.  
Now, what we notice front and foremost is  
That this convulsion speaks not, pictures not  
The heart of France. It comes of artifice –  
From the unique and sinister influence  
Of a smart army-gamester – upon men  
Who have shared his own excitements, spoils and crimes.

SIR FRANCIS BURDETT *speaks first for the  
Opposition –*

## EPILOGUE

BURDETT

. . . Wrongly has Bonaparte's late course been called  
A rude incursion on the soil of France —  
Who ever knew a sole and single man  
Invade a nation thirty million strong,  
And gain in some few days full sovereignty  
Against that nation's will! — The truth is this:  
The nation longed for him, and has obtained him.

*After other members have spoken, LORD  
CASTLEREAGH replies:*

CASTLEREAGH

The arguments of Members opposite  
Posit conditions which experience proves  
But figments of a dream; — that honesty,  
Truth and good faith in this same Bonaparte  
May be assumed and can be acted on:  
This is of one who is loud to violate  
Bonds the most sacred, treaties the most grave! . . .

. . . Ministers are well within their rights  
To claim that their responsibility  
Be not disturbed by hackneyed forms of speech  
Upon war's horrors, and the bliss of peace, —  
Which none denies! (*Cheers*)

## APPENDICES



APPENDIX A

FORMER GERMAN COLONIES

ALLOCATION OF MANDATES

<i>Mandated Area</i>	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>Entry into Force of Mandate</i>
1. Tanganyika	Great Britain	July 1922
2. Ruanda-Urundi	Belgium	July 1922
3. British Togo	Great Britain	July 1922
4. British Cameroons	Great Britain	July 1922
5. French Togo	France	July 1922
6. French Cameroons	France	July 1922
7. South-west Africa	Union of S. Africa	Dec. 1920
8. New Guinea	Australia	Dec. 1920
9. Nauru	British Empire: Gt. Britain Australia New Zealand	Dec. 1920
10. South Sea Islands	Japan	Dec. 1920
11. Western Samoa	New Zealand	Dec. 1920

## APPENDIX B

### PRESIDENT WILSON'S FOURTEEN POINTS SUMMARIZED

I. Open covenants of peace openly arrived at, after which there shall be no private international understandings of any kind, but diplomacy shall always proceed frankly and in the public view.

II. Absolute freedom of navigation upon the seas.

III. The removal, as far as possible, of all economic barriers.

IV. Adequate guarantees given and taken that national armaments will be reduced to the lowest point consistent with domestic safety.

V. A free, open-minded and absolutely impartial adjustment of all colonial claims, based upon the principle that the interests of the populations concerned must have equal weight with the equitable claims of the government whose title is to be determined.

VI. The evacuation of all Russian territory and a settlement which would assure her of a sincere welcome into the society of free nations.

VII. The evacuation of Belgium, and no infringement of her sovereignty.

VIII. All French territory to be freed and Alsace-Lorraine to be restored.

IX. A readjustment of the frontiers of Italy should be effected along clearly recognizable lines of nationality.

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X. The peoples of Austria-Hungary should be accorded the freest opportunity of autonomous development.

XI. Rumania, Serbia and Montenegro to be evacuated.

XII. The Turkish portions of the Ottoman Empire should be assured a secure sovereignty, but the other nationalities which are now under Turkish rule should be assured unmolested opportunity of autonomous development.

XIII. An independent Polish State should be erected, which should be assured a free and secure access to the sea.

XIV. A general association of nations must be formed under specific covenants for the purpose of affording mutual guarantees of political independence and territorial integrity to great and small States alike.

Referring in the closing passage of his speech specifically to Germany, President Wilson said: 'We wish her only to accept a place of equality among the peoples of the world instead of a place of mastery.' He did not 'presume to suggest to her any alteration or modification of her institutions'. But he did not wish to have to deal with 'the military party and the men whose creed is imperial domination'.

And on September 27th, 1918, President Wilson made the following Five Points:

1. The impartial justice meted out must involve no discrimination.
2. No special or separate interest of any nation or any group of nations can be made the basis of any part



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of the settlement which is not consistent with the common interest of all.

3. There can be no league or alliances or special covenants and understandings within the general and common family of the League of Nations.

4. No special economic combinations to be allowed, or any form of economic boycott.

5. All international agreements to be made known in their entirety.

The Treaties of Brest-Litovsk and Bucharest were imposed by victorious Germany upon Russia and Rumania respectively between the dates of President Wilson's promulgation of his Fourteen Points and Germany's acceptance of them.

Their terms are given below:

### THE TREATY OF BREST-LITOVSK

This Treaty was signed on March 3rd, 1918, between Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria, Germany and Turkey of the one part, and Russia of the other part. Its main provisions were as follows:

*Articles 1 and 2.* Peace is declared and all agitation and propaganda renounced by both sides.

*Article 3.* Russia is to cede all territory west of a line Riga-Dvinsk-Lida-Pruzhaný (on the Ukraine frontier); she thereby renounces all rights over these territories.

*Article 4.* Germany agrees to evacuate all territory east of this line, as soon as Russia demobilizes. Russia agrees immediately to evacuate the eastern Anatolian provinces, which must be restored to Turkey, and the

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districts of Ardahan, Kars and Batum, which must be allowed to reorganize themselves.

*Article 5.* Russia agrees to demobilize her army without delay, to disarm her warships and to remove mines in the Baltic and the Black Sea so as to allow the resumption of merchant shipping.

*Article 6.* Russia undertakes to conclude peace with the Ukraine and to recognize the treaty between the Ukraine and the Quadruple Alliance. She also agrees to evacuate the Ukraine and to refrain from propaganda against its government.

Estonia and Livonia shall likewise be evacuated and occupied temporarily by a German police force. The eastern frontier of Livonia is to run through Lakes Peipus, Pskov and Luban and then towards Livenhof on the Dvina; while that of Estonia is to follow the line of the Narva River.

Finland and the Aland Isles shall also be evacuated by Russian troops, and all Finnish ports by the Russian fleet. The fortifications of the Aland Isles must be removed as soon as possible. The future of these islands shall be the subject of a special agreement to be concluded between Germany, Russia, Finland and Sweden.

*Article 7.* The Contracting Parties agree to respect the independence of Persia and Afghanistan.

*Article 8.* Prisoners of war shall be permitted to return home.

*Article 9.* All repayment of war costs and damages is renounced by the Contracting Parties.

*Article 12.* Separate treaties will deal with the

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exchange of prisoners of war, the amnesty question, the treatment of merchant shipping and the establishment of legal relationships.

### THE TREATY OF BUCHAREST

This Treaty was signed on May 7th, 1918, between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Bulgaria and Turkey of the one part, and Rumania of the other part. Its main provisions were as follows:

*Articles 1 and 2.* Peace is to be established and diplomatic relations resumed.

*Articles 3 and 9.* The Rumanian army and navy shall be demobilized immediately except for those forces employed in Bessarabia. All arms and ammunition shall be handed over to the Supreme Command of the Quadruple Alliance. Demobilized Rumanian troops are to remain in Moldavia until the evacuation of Rumanian occupied regions.

*Articles 10 and 12.* Rumania cedes again to Bulgaria the Bulgarian territory that she gained by the Treaty of Bucharest, 1913 (i.e. the Dobrudja). The Danube frontier between the regions ceded to Bulgaria and Rumania shall follow the river valley and will be demarcated by a Special Commission. Rumania also cedes to the Allied Powers a portion of the Dobrudja north of this frontier line and extending up to the Danube. Rumania will be guaranteed a trade route to the Black Sea, via Tchernavoda and Constanza.

Rumania agrees that her frontiers shall be rectified in favour of Austria-Hungary. Two mixed commissions shall fix this frontier on the spot.

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Rumanian inhabitants of the ceded regions shall have the right of opting for Rumanian nationality.

*Article 13.* The Contracting Parties mutually renounce the indemnification of their war costs.

*Articles 14 - 23.* Rumanian territory shall be evacuated at times to be later agreed upon. The army of occupation shall not exceed six divisions; it will be maintained at the expense of Rumania. Railways, posts and telegraphs will remain under military administration. As far as possible civil administration will be transferred to the Rumanian authorities.

*Articles 24 - 26.* Rumania shall conclude a new Danube Navigation Act with Germany, Austria-Hungary, Bulgaria and Turkey, regulating the legal position of the Danube from the point where it becomes navigable. Rumania shall not levy tolls or duties on the ships of the Allied Powers.

*Articles 27 - 28.* Equal rights shall be accorded to all religious denominations in Rumania. Diversity of religious belief shall not affect the political and civil rights of the inhabitants.

*Articles 29 - 31.* The economic relations between the Allied Powers and Rumania, the exchange of prisoners of war, and the restoration of legal relations will be regulated by separate treaties.

A legal and political supplementary treaty between Germany and Rumania followed. Clause 2 provided for the payment by Rumania of a war indemnity. Rumania was to renounce indemnifications for damage caused by German military measures.

The Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was negotiated face to face in so far as the Bolsheviks were represented by a

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delegation. But in fact the final draft practically consisted of conditions imposed by the Germans. The Soviet delegation was led by Joffe and Kameneff and the first session of the Conference took place on December 22nd, 1917. When M. Trotsky arrived on January 7th, most of the Russian experts left Brest. On February 10th he departed too after failing completely to secure any of his demands, and the final treaty was signed by only four Sovietists.

At Bucharest Rumania was represented at first by General Averescu and then by the Germanophil M. Marghiloman and M. Arion. It was obvious that Rumania was at the mercy of her enemies. The Rumanian delegates made a few attempts to discuss the enemy's demands, but it was soon evident that the only thing to do was to yield. The peace negotiations were thus a farce, for the Germans allowed no discussion at all. Their conditions were laid before the Rumanian delegates and it was intimated that they must take them or leave them.

APPENDIX C

COVENANT OF THE LEAGUE OF  
NATIONS

*Article XVI*

1. Should any Member of the League resort to war in disregard of its Covenants under Articles 12, 13 or 15, it shall *ipso facto* be deemed to have committed an act of war against all other Members of the League, which hereby undertake immediately to subject it to the severance of all trade or financial relations, the prohibition of all intercourse between their nationals and the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State, and the prevention of all financial, commercial or personal intercourse between the nationals of the Covenant-breaking State and the nationals of any other State, whether a Member of the League or not.

2. It shall be the duty of the Council in such case to recommend to the several Governments concerned what effective military, naval or air force the Members of the League shall severally contribute to the armed forces to be used to protect the Covenants of the League.

3. The Members of the League agree, further, that they will mutually support one another in the financial and economic measures which are taken under this Article, in order to minimize the loss and inconvenience resulting from the above measures, and that they will mutually support one another in resisting any special

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measures aimed at one of their number by the Covenant-breaking State, and that they will take the necessary steps to afford passage through their territory to the forces of any of the Members of the League which are co-operating to protect the Covenants of the League.

4. Any Member of the League which has violated any Covenant of the League may be declared to be no longer a Member of the League by a vote of the Council, concurred in by the representatives of all the other Members of the League represented thereon.

APPENDIX D

INTERNATIONAL TREATY FOR THE  
RENUNCIATION OF WAR AS AN  
INSTRUMENT OF NATIONAL POLICY

*Paris, August 27th, 1928*

*Article I*

The High Contracting Parties solemnly declare in the names of their respective peoples that they condemn recourse to war for the solution of international controversies, and renounce it as an instrument of national policy in their relations with one another.

*Article II*

The High Contracting Parties agree that the settlement or solution of all disputes or conflicts of whatever nature or of whatever origin they may be, which may arise among them, shall never be sought except by pacific means.

*Article III*

The present Treaty shall be ratified by the High Contracting Parties named in the Preamble in accordance with their respective constitutional requirements and shall take effect as between them as soon as all their several instruments of ratification shall have been deposited at Washington. . . .

(H.B.M.'s Ratification deposited March 2nd, 1929.  
The Treaty came into force on July 24th, 1929.)



## A P P E N D I X E

### H U N N I S M

In pre-War Germany descent from the Huns was always freely admitted and sometimes referred to with pride. It may be recalled that the ex-Kaiser, when he was reviewing German troops about to embark for China in 1900 (after the Boxer Rising), addressed them as follows:

‘Just as the Huns a thousand years ago under the leadership of Attila gained a reputation in virtue of which they still live in historical tradition, so may the name of Germany become known in such a manner in China that no Chinaman will ever again even dare to look askance at a German.’

One has not heard the word Hun in use in Germany since the Great War, possibly because it had become a term of opprobrium among Germany’s enemies. The Huns reached what is now Austria about A.D. 380, and appear to have advanced up the Danube valley into southern Germany, and thence to have spread northwards, conquering the greater part of what is now the modern Reich. The period of greatest expansion occurred about 433-53 during the reign of Attila.





